

THE END OF PALESTINE? MARTIN PERETZ, THE EDITORS

The New REPUBLIC

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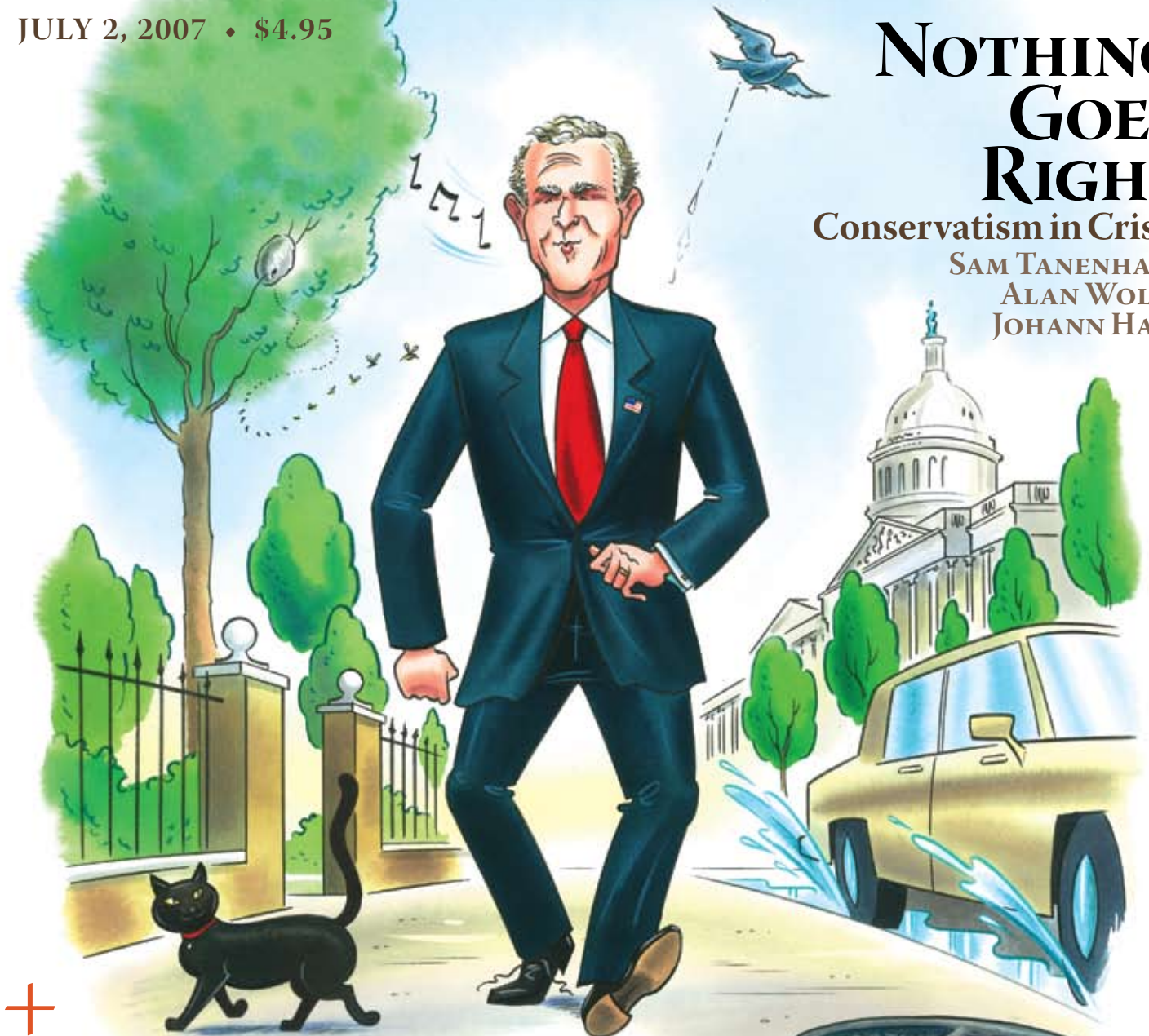
NOTHING GOES RIGHT

Conservatism in Crisis

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+

MY LUNCH
WITH REAGAN

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DON DELILLO'S
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Who Lost Gaza?

A GREAT DEBATE has already begun on the subject of who lost Gaza. Increasingly, one hears that the Israelis did, or the Americans did; that the disaster is the consequence of Israeli policies or American policies, of Israeli harshness and American indifference. It is necessary to insist, therefore, that the primary responsibility for Palestinian actions falls on Palestinians. To believe the opposite is to hold a condescending imperialist view of the Palestinians as the passive objects of others; as nothing but the wretched playthings of power, of circumstances over which they have no control; as people in some way unqualified for history. If the Hamas revolution is anything, however, it is historical action. The Palestinians in Gaza are not only suffering their history; they are also making it, and ruining it.

Hamas, like Hezbollah, and like Al Qaeda, is a phenomenon with deep social, cultural, psychological, and philosophical roots in its own universe. The internal factors are more decisive than the external factors. The authority of the Koran preceded, and precedes Israel; just as it preceded, and precedes, America; just as it preceded, and precedes, modernity. The political theology of Hamas is not, as outraged commentators like to say, an expression of nihilism; it is an expression of a grandiose and particular and radical worldview—of a belief in certain metaphysical and moral propositions that cannot be dismissed as simply desperate reactions to political misfortunes. If Hamas were not so genuinely indigenous, it would not be so genuinely terrifying. Could Israel and the United States have alleviated some of the hardships that the Palestinians have endured in recent years? Certainly. (Set aside, for the moment, the significant question of whether Israel and the United States should have recognized, and engaged with, Hamas.) Could any Israeli and American alleviations have preempted the civil war in Palestine and robbed the clerics and the gunmen of Hamas of their prestige in Palestinian society? You must be kidding.

Now return to the question of Hamas and diplomacy. It is an odd question, of course, since diplomacy is precisely what Hamas repudiates. But the more violent Hamas gets, the more one hears that it is time for diplomacy. About what, exactly? A Palestinian state, comes the answer. But the only Palestinian state that Hamas will discuss, insofar as it discusses, is the one that will erase Israel from the map. Is this the proper subject of negotiations? Yes, Hamas was democratically elected in Palestine; but democracy is not all that one needs to know about the legitimacy of a government. The legitimacy of a government does not guarantee the legitimacy of a government's actions. Those missiles that Hamas has been firing into Israel from Gaza are not attacks by a movement, they are attacks by a government.

So this leaves the West Bank, and the "West Bank first" option. Israel and the United States must indeed do whatever they can to strengthen the hand of Mahmoud Abbas, as a matter of the most elementary prudence; but we must all be very sober about the implications of "Hamas-stan" for the prospects for peace. Those prospects in the near term are, in a word, null. Nothing should be done by Israel that would further foreclose the possibility of peace, but neither should Israeli policy be premised on the imminence of reconciliation. There is violence all around it. And the West Bank is not exactly calm. Hamas flourishes there, too; and so does the secular version of "the armed struggle." The government appointed by Abbas—in

defiance of democratic procedure, bless him—includes many modernizers and liberalizers, most especially Salam Fayyad, the new prime minister, but they are not the uncontested heroes of their people. They are fighting the good fight, and they deserve help. But the outcome of the fight is far from clear. And the outcome will not be determined by anybody except the Palestinians themselves. For many decades, the world has clamored for Palestinian self-determination. Well, the clamor can now cease. Palestinian self-determination is here for all the world to see. So is self-determination good news or bad news? It all depends on what is determined.



Statehood Continued

UTAH IS A TICKING time bomb. Ever since the last congressional reapportionment in 2000, when Utah failed by a mere 856 residents to gain an additional seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Beehive State has been abuzz with discontent. Utahans have griped that the 2000 census's statistical methods for computing state populations were based on "guesstimates" and thus flawed; they've complained that, had the census counted the 11,000 Mormon missionaries who were away from home at the time, Utah would have been awarded the additional seat; one Utah congressman even tried to freeze funding for a pet Census Bureau project until it came around to Utah's way of thinking—or, rather, counting. And, as each one of these arguments has fallen on deaf ears—the courts rejected Utah's lawsuit for a fourth seat, and the Utah congressman's anti-census legislation went nowhere—the prospect of unrest in the hardscrabble streets of Salt Lake and Ogden has only grown greater.

But now it seems disaster may be averted. Last week, the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee passed a bill giving Utah its extra seat. The measure now goes to the full Senate where, if it's passed, it will land on the president's desk, since the House passed identical legislation in April. At long last, Utahans are on the verge of achieving justice—not to mention a fourth representative.

It's not the prospect of justice for Utahans, however, that most excites us. Rather, it's the prospect of justice for the District of Columbia. Because, should Utah gain a fourth voting member, the District of Columbia will also gain one—which is one more than it has now. As part of an ingenious solution to overcome Republican objections to awarding the District a meaningful seat, GOP Representative Tom Davis of Virginia and his Democratic colleague Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District's nonvoting House delegate, hitched the predominately Democratic District's fortunes to the predominately Republican Utah's by proposing to expand the House from 435 to 437 members, with one of the new seats going to Utah and the other going to the District.

The case for D.C. voting rights is obvi-

ous and has been made in this space before. To make it, again, briefly: District citizens pay federal taxes; they're subject to federal laws; they fight—and die—in America's wars. Moreover, it's problematic, to say the least, that at a time when the U.S. is trying to export democracy abroad, democracy is being denied to those who live in the nation's capital. Now that Davis and Norton have come up with a way—their vanilla state for chocolate city trade-off—to give the District voting representation in Congress without affecting the House's partisan balance, the case for D.C. voting rights would seem to be a slam dunk.

But, alas, there are still a few hurdles standing in its way—namely Mitch McConnell and George W. Bush. McConnell has threatened to filibuster the legislation; and, even if it overcomes a filibuster and passes the Senate, the White House has indicated it will veto the measure. McConnell and Bush base their opposition on ostensibly constitutional grounds, arguing that the Constitution grants congressional representation only to states, which, of course, the District of Columbia is not. But the legislation, as it's crafted, addresses these

concerns—since it provides for expedited judicial review of the bill if it's challenged after becoming law. As Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine said in voting for the bill in committee last week, "I have concluded that the constitutional-ity of this legislation

is a close call and is best resolved by the courts and not by this committee."

Which means that something else may be behind Bush's and McConnell's continued opposition to the legislation. For years, Republicans blanched at the notion of voting rights for the District of Columbia—not just for partisan reasons but for racial ones as well. Simply put, the prospect of Representative Marion Barry was too much for them to bear. But the District—which is now governed by the reform-minded Mayor Adrian Fenty—has come a long way from the dark days of the Barry regime. It's past time for the few remaining holdouts in the GOP to leave behind their dark days, too, by granting District residents the rights they deserve. And if, in doing so, they keep peace on the mean streets of Provo, that's all the better. ♦



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Bloomsday

A New York mayor and the David Broderization of America.

JONATHAN CHAIT

ANY SUCCESSFUL elected executive knows that real results are more important than partisan battles and that good ideas should take precedence over rigid adherence to any particular political ideology.” So declared New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg upon renouncing his membership in the GOP last week. The problem, of course, is that people don’t agree on what “real results” or “good ideas” are. Cutting taxes? Raising taxes? Funding stem-cell research? Banning stem-cell research? This is exactly why we have partisan battles in the first place.

You would think that anybody who failed to grasp this would be urged to study a high school civics textbook. Instead, Bloomberg is being urged to run for president and lauded for his statesmanship.

Bloomberg has thus become the most prominent example of what you could call partisanship scolds. These are people who believe that disagreement is the central problem in U.S. politics, that both parties are to blame in equal measure, and that rejecting party ties or ideology is synonymous with the demonstration of virtue. While partisanship scolds believe that they stand in bold contrast to Washington, they are probably more heavily represented among the Beltway elite than any other demographic.

The official lobby of the partisanship scolds is a group called “Unity ’08”—a collection of graying eminences from both parties who are calling for a bipartisan presidential ticket, perhaps led by Bloomberg. Their rhetoric appears to be targeted at people who enjoy kittens, rainbows, and David Broder columns. Specifically, Unity ’08 says its ticket will run on “ideas and traditions which unite and empower us as individuals and as a people.”

Well, that’s nice. Unfortunately, when the partisanship scolds get a little more specific, things tend to break down. The first problem is that they can’t agree on whether partisanship is making Washington pay too much attention to public opinion or too little. Bloomberg says the former: “When you go to Washington now, you can feel a

TRB *From Washington*

sense of fear in the air—the fear to do anything, or say anything, that might affect the polls, or give the other side an advantage.” Unity ’08, on the other hand, says the latter: Neither party, it claims, “reflects the aspirations, fears, or will of the majority of Americans.”

The second problem is that the partisanship scolds are extremely vague about which chunk of Americans is being left out by the growing extremism in Washington. It is true that some broadly popular views are under-represented in national politics. A detailed political typology released by the Pew Center in 2005 showed that Democratic voters are not as socially liberal as their leaders and Republican voters are not nearly as economically conservative. So there is a sizeable base of socially traditionalist, economically populist voters to be had. Unfortunately, the partisanship scolds invariably cater to exactly the opposite demographic: elites who favor free trade, open immigration, cutting entitlements, and social tolerance.

Third, in the age of George W. Bush, the substance of the partisanship scold ideology is no longer, by any reasonable definition, centrist. They are moderate Democrats who don’t want to admit it. Unity ’08 proposes to address the following issues: “Global terrorism, our national debt, our dependence on foreign oil, the emergence of India and China as strategic competitors and/or allies, nuclear proliferation, global climate change, the corruption of Washington’s lobbying system, the education of our young, the health care of all, and the disappearance of the American Dream for so many of our people.”

Most Democrats wouldn’t disagree with anything on this list. Most Republicans, on the other hand, are happy to raise the national debt in order to cut taxes, either don’t believe in global climate change or don’t want to do anything serious to stop it, oppose any plan that could pro-

vide health care for all Americans, and think the American Dream is thriving. Unity ’08 further insists that gun control, abortion, and gay marriage should not “dominate or even crowd our national agenda.” Which party has been putting those issues at the center of the agenda? Not the Democrats.

Bloomberg’s politics are even further to the left. He’s an out-and-out social liberal, banning smoking in public places and going to war against the National Rifle Association. He emphasizes programs to help the poor, has worked closely with unions, and has denounced rising inequality as a threat to democracy. But for Bloomberg and his admirers to admit that their views do have a home in a major party would destroy the basis of their self-image. Thus they must maintain at all costs the pretense of transcending ideology.

This pretense can be stretched to the point of absurdity, as evidenced by *Time*’s glowing cover story on Bloomberg and his fellow moderate Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. The premise of the article is that the two are “doing big things that Washington has failed to do.” What things? The article cites “Washington’s neglect of the working poor” and the fact that “Washington rejected the Kyoto Protocol.” Schwarzenegger is quoted touting his initiative to fund stem-cell research as a slap at “the Federal Government.” “Washington” and “the Federal Government” are, of course, euphemisms for the Republican Party. But openly saying so would be partisan. Partisanship scolds oppose the GOP agenda, but rather than acknowledge and confront those ideological differences, they assume them away.

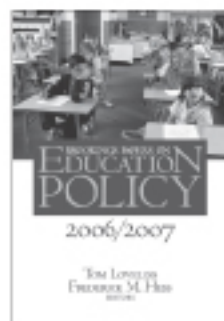
Indeed, the premise that ideological extremism has left no room in either party for moderates like Bloomberg is belied by Bloomberg himself. There are many things keeping Bloomberg from running on a conventional party ticket, but the alleged extremism of the two parties is not one of them. A longtime Democrat, he switched his affiliation for his initial mayoral run in 2001, but only because running as a Republican offered him a clearer path to the nomination. Bloomberg’s ideology today places him firmly within the Democratic camp.

If Bloomberg took the honest route and switched back to the Democrats to run for president, he’d be condemned as a transparent opportunist. Instead, he disingenuously renounces party altogether and is praised as a visionary. ♦

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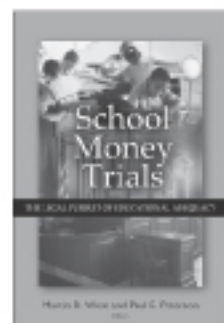
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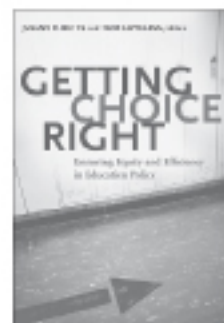
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Advance Man

Did the Bushes get to George Tenet?

GEORGE TENET WAS in a rush to cash in—or, at least, that was the impression he gave. No CIA director had ever moved so quickly to write an account of his tenure. After resigning his post in June 2004, Tenet swiftly retained Robert Barnett—agent to the Washington stars, renowned for negotiating monumental advances for Bill and Hillary Clinton, among others—to organize a secretive auction for his memoir. The winner—with a bid of slightly over \$4 million, according to a publishing source—was Random House’s Crown Publishing Group. But the real winner, at least initially, was Tenet, who was best known for describing the case that Iraq had WMD as a “slam dunk” and who would now have the opportunity to distance himself from that fiasco—while getting paid handsomely to do so.

And then an odd thing happened. Sometime between the auction and the moment when a contract should have been inked, Tenet balked, informing Random House that he had decided to delay the book. Eighteen months would pass before Tenet approached the publishing industry again. By that time, the value of his story had fallen dramatically. In the end, HarperCollins—which had bid \$4 million the first time around, barely losing out to Random House—won the second auction with a bid that was just half its original offer, according to the publishing source. Tenet has done nothing to correct media reports—in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere—that he received \$4 million to write the book. But Barnett, who represented him in the negotiations, conceded to me that “all of the numbers” he has seen publicly reported about Tenet’s contract were wrong and that the delay caused his client to settle “for less.”

Which raises a question: Why did a man who seemed so bent on cashing in



Was that medal around George Tenet’s neck part of his book deal?

put off writing his memoir—at a loss of some \$2 million?

THERE CAN BE no doubt that, while the delay was costly to Tenet, it was very valuable to the White House. The net effect was to push the book’s publication date beyond the 2006 midterm elections. In the course of these book deliberations, Tenet received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Coincidence? Tenet says yes. “My decision not to proceed was based solely on my desire to let some time pass, to do more research, and to gain some perspective,” he told me over e-mail last week. “No other reason.”

And it certainly seems plausible that

Tenet “was not ready to write the book,” as he had said to me in an interview earlier this month. But he was not very clear on why this realization struck him *after* he had gone to the trouble of hiring a lawyer and conducting an auction. Nor was he clear on what conversations he’d had with members of the Bush family during the 18-month interval between auctions.

The reason I was asking such questions was because Tenet’s book had come up last summer when I was interviewing Prince Bandar—a close friend of Tenet, former Saudi ambassador to Washington, and confidant of the Bush family who has been described as a surrogate son to the elder Bush. At the time, the book—which would eventually be published

in April 2007 under the title *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*—was headed for a long security review, a process designed to prevent sensitive information from slipping inadvertently into books by officials who have had access to intelligence.

Bandar told me that he had been contacted by Tenet to check some of the references to Saudi Arabia. But he also told me something quite revealing about how the Bush family operates behind the scenes. “I knew President Bush called him,” Bandar explained. “The question is: Was it 41 or 43?” Bandar thought it very unlikely that George W. Bush called. “He would not have had it in him to come and say [to Tenet], ‘Please, please, don’t write this book.’ It is not in his character.”

Tenet, Bandar says, greatly admires Bush 41, and the feeling is mutual. It was under Tenet that the CIA’s headquarters in Langley was renamed the George H.W. Bush Center for Intelligence. And Bandar explains that Tenet “shared with Senior more things than people know.” In other words, the two men were close. Bandar’s guess is that, after he heard about the book, the elder Bush—or a family member acting on his behalf—contacted Tenet and said something like, “This is not dignified. You are not from the State Department. You are the CIA, and you are keeping the flag up.”

When I asked Tenet whether he had received a call from President Bush—either one—to express concerns about the book, he became quite agitated and said everything I had heard in that regard was a “complete fabrication.” I was almost startled when he said, “I swear on my father’s grave” that no such counsel from the former or current president had been forthcoming. A week or so later, when I asked him to put in writing what he wanted to reiterate about the matter, Tenet said this: “Neither President GHW Bush nor President GW Bush—nor anyone acting on their behalf—influenced me or sought to influence me. No one.” For his part, Bush Senior sent me the following statement: “It is absolutely not true. I never discussed with George Tenet when or if he should write a book. There is not even a semblance of truth to this.”

WHETHER OR NOT Bandar’s theory is true, the Bush camp was clearly paying close attention to the book. It wasn’t just the CIA that vetted Tenet’s memoir; the White House press office did as well. What’s more, according to a foreign diplomat who visited the Oval Office earlier this year, President Bush seemed well-briefed on

the revelations in Tenet’s manuscript. The visitor, whom I have known for years, asked the president about Tenet’s book in passing. Bush replied that he understood the book would soon be cleared and that it contained no criticism of the president but had some tough words about “others” in the administration. (The White House did not respond to a request for comment.)

In the end, the Bushies got just about everything they wanted out of what could have been a dicey situation. For one thing, the book wasn’t nearly as nasty toward Bush as it might have been, especially given the depth of Tenet’s private disdain for Bush’s handling of the Iraq war and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. For another, the White House, armed with foreknowledge of the mem-

oir’s contents, was able to put Tenet on the defensive from the moment the book appeared—unlike when Richard Clarke’s book came out and the administration seemed caught off guard.

But, perhaps most important, Tenet’s late publication date ensured that his revelations would not affect the outcome of the midterms. Of course, we’ll probably never know whether Tenet was listening to Bush or his own conscience when he held back publication and caused the value of his memoir to plummet by some \$2 million. Either way, though, Tenet did the Bush family a very expensive favor.

PATRICK TYLER

Patrick Tyler is a former foreign correspondent for THE NEW YORK TIMES and THE WASHINGTON POST.

My Lunch With Reagan

*He remembered. I forgot.
Makes me think.*

THE LITERARY EDITOR of *THE NEW REPUBLIC*, Leon Wieseltier, brought the joyous news. “Guess what, Mike. You’re mentioned in Reagan’s diaries.” The diaries were published recently by HarperCollins and were generally well-received. Edited by America’s historian-on-steroids, Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries* apparently reveal Reagan to be more thoughtful than he is normally given credit for. Of course, our standards in the area of presidential thoughtfulness have plummeted in recent years. Still, the fact that Reagan was

writing it all down was news, and an interesting departure from presidential tradition. Traditionally, presidents use a hidden tape recorder.

But I was more interested in the me angle, frankly. And it was a puzzle. What on earth could Reagan have written? I indulged my imagination, and my ego: “January 22, 1983. Mommie [Nancy] says that Kinsley’s column this week in *THE NEW REPUBLIC* undermines the entire philosophical basis of my administration. O dear O dear, I had better not read it.”

Or: “October 6, 1987. Why does Kinsley keep picking on me? He is the only thing standing between me and the total destruction of the welfare state. But, ha: I will destroy him—destroy him utterly—



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Dr. David Zarefsky is the Owen L. Coon Professor of Argumentation and Debate and Professor of Communication Studies Northwestern University, where he has taught for more than 30 years. The Student Government of Northwestern has elected Professor Zarefsky to the Honor Roll for Teaching 13 times.

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or my name's not ... not ... not Say, they had 'State Fair' on TV last night. What a wholesome, clean-cut young man that Pat Boone is."

Or: "May 17, 1986. A moment I've been dreading. George brought his ne'er-do-well son around this morning and asked me to find the kid a job. Not the political one who lives in Florida. The one who hangs around here all the time looking shiftless. This so-called kid is already almost 40 and has never had a real job. Maybe I'll call Kinsley over at THE NEW REPUBLIC and see if they'll hire him as a contributing editor or something. That looks like easy work."

EXCITED, I BORROWED a copy of the book and gave it a "Washington read." That means looking yourself up in the index. It's best to find a copy you can peruse in private. You can do your Washington read in a bookstore, but it's tricky. People can see you pathetically scanning for your name and, even more pathetically, not finding it. And OK, fair enough, why on earth would you be in the index of a history of medieval France? Answer: for the same reason you might be in any book—i.e., no reason at all. Unless, of course, you are Henry Kissinger, in which case virtually every book published in the past few

decades, if it contains an index at all, devotes several lines of it to references to you. The contrast between Kissinger and everyone else in this regard is a special burden on those of us who share Kissinger's neighborhood in alphabetical order. At least Zbigniew Brzezinski is spared this. But remind me to bomb Hanoi in my next life.

In the case of *The Reagan Diaries*, however, I'd been tipped off. And, sure enough, there I was in the index and on page 400, which describes the events of Friday, March 21, 1986, a busy day for Reagan. He learns that Panama will not take in the unwanted dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos. He meets with our ambassador to Russia to talk about Gorbachev. Javier Perez de Cuelar, secretary-general of the United Nations, drops by in the afternoon, and Billy Graham comes over for dinner. Reagan finishes writing his speech for the annual Gridiron dinner. He has an interview with *New York Times* reporters. And at midday: "had off-the-record lunch with Meg Greenfield, David Brinkley, and editor of NEW REPUBLIC (Michael Kinsley)."

Picture the scene. David Brinkley, the famously sardonic NBC, then ABC, news anchor—no relation to Doug the Historian—says something sardonic. Meg

Greenfield, the editor of *The Washington Post's* editorial page, laughs her throaty cigarette laugh in appreciation. The president, uncomprehending but amiably eager to share in the fun, offers a hearty ho-ho. And me? And me? Well, here is the problem: This whole thing never happened. Or, if it did happen, I was not there. Or, if I was there, it had slipped my mind. I had no memory of having lunch with President Reagan in the White House or anywhere else. And it's not the kind of thing you forget, is it? Or maybe it is. Is Alzheimer's contagious?

Was it possible that Reagan remembered having lunch with me, but I didn't remember having lunch with him? A friend of mine has a story about how Bill Clinton, shortly after being elected president of the United States, came up to him at a large social gathering and said, "You don't remember me, but—" they had met once, two decades earlier. And my friend realized that it was true: They had met, and he hadn't remembered. But Clinton is famous for this sort of thing, and he wasn't president when my friend met him the first time. By contrast, phenomenal feats of memory were never Reagan's forte.

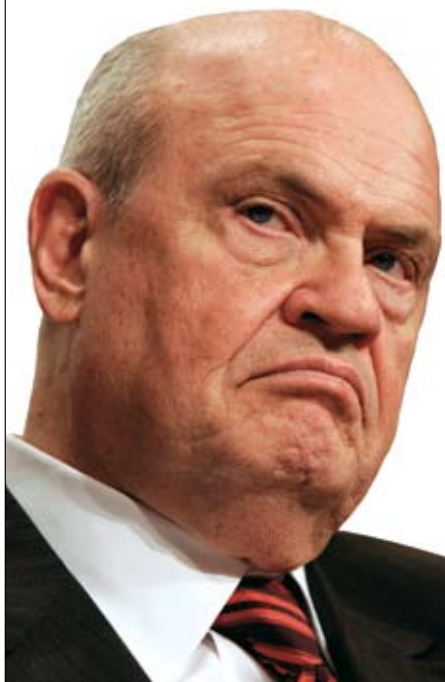
Phenomenal feats of making stuff up and convincing himself that they were true, on the other hand, were a bit of

WHO'S CASHING IN?

Fred Thompson, Pickup Truck Populist

During his career as a country lawyer, Fred Thompson's client list included:

- ➔ Westinghouse, attempting to win federal subsidies for a nuclear reactor project (denounced by the Heritage Foundation as a "multibillion-dollar folly").
- ➔ Central States Pension Fund of the Teamsters (to be sure, after Jimmy Hoffa's death and the government takeover of the fund).
- ➔ The Tennessee Savings and Loan League, where he lobbied for a deregulation bill that created the conditions for the \$150 billion S&L crisis of the 1980s.
- ➔ Haiti's ousted left-wing president Jean-Bertrand Aristide (although Thompson claims his work consisted of a single unpaid phone call).
- ➔ Foreign corporations, including Toyota, the Perrier Group, and Uranerzbergbau, a German mining conglomerate.
- ➔ The London-based Equitas Ltd., a reinsurance company, in its quest to avoid paying claims for asbestos-related health problems (Thompson received \$760,000 for his services).



a Reagan specialty. He liberated the death camps, to name but one example. But surely President Reagan had better things to make up than having lunch with me. And, anyway, who am I to question the president of the United States? Even one who is deceased. In fact, everyone at this alleged lunch is now deceased, except me. So I can basically make up any story I wish. And my story is that, on March 21, 1986, I had lunch with the president and two far more distinguished journalists than myself. With Reagan to back me up, who is going to challenge me? (And, for that matter, who is going to question him?)

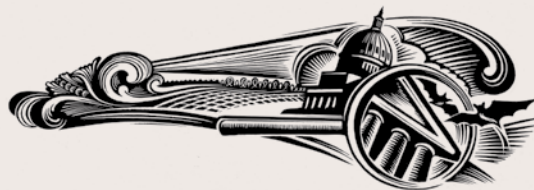
OF COURSE, those parentheses are troublesome. I don't mind immortality in parentheses, if that's the only model on offer, but "(Michael Kinsley)" does look like something the editor dropped in. Furthermore, the reference to this lunch was not in the main text of the diaries, as edited, but in a sort of junior varsity section Brinkley included at the end of each day, summarizing material he apparently found too boring to reproduce in full. But surely what matters is that Reagan himself recorded this lunch, not that Douglas Brinkley failed to be fascinated. And Brinkley confirmed that the actual diaries actually did contain my name and do state that I was at this lunch.

And, once I had decided I was there, the memories started flooding back. March 21, 1986: What a day! Retrieving my best suit from the freezer (what I couldn't remember was how it had gotten there); making sure that I had the exact bus fare; thinking up a tough question to prove that I couldn't be bought for a lunch at the White House ("How are you today, Mr. President?").

So it was irritating in the extreme when Douglas Brinkley e-mailed again a couple of days later to report his own bit of recovered memory. He said that, upon further investigation, an editor at HarperCollins (a company owned by Rupert Murdoch, I'd like to point out, for no particular reason) had slipped in my name. He or she—and Reagan, too—apparently were unaware of *TNR*'s all-chiefs-and-no-Indians tradition of ladling out titles instead of money. Almost everyone at *TNR* is an "editor" of some kind. Reagan, it seems, actually had lunch with Charles Krauthammer.

Brinkley was terribly apologetic and said he would correct the error in the next edition. I said that wouldn't be necessary as far as I was concerned. Please don't bother.

MICHAEL KINSLEY



On the Hill WARMED OVER

John Dingell versus the Earth.

YOU'RE LOOKING at my heads?"

John Dingell, the 80-year-old Michigan representative, watches me gaily as I gaze at the rows of antlered stags and snarling boar mounted on the walls of his Rayburn office. The chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee tells me he shot the décor himself: a disquieting fact, no doubt, to the environmen-

warnings have severely backfired with Dingell: He views their bearers as caught in a rush to save the world while forgetting the sacred mechanisms of legislating and the economic machine that fuels the American dream. "I have no sympathy for somebody who doesn't want to write a balanced bill," he grouses.

This isn't the way Dingell probably hoped to inaugurate his stint as chairman. After 52 years in the

House, he could have retired and spent his days munching hot dogs slathered in rivulets of chili and yellow mustard at his favorite hometown "Coney Island" diner. But when the Democrats came back into power, Dingell stayed on to regain the powerful chairmanship that had been his baby throughout the 1980s. Who would forgo—even for the Rust Belt's best chili dog—the chance to reign one last time over greens, oil executives, and Detroit automakers?

But this time around, things have been different—and in a way that makes Dingell's blood boil. With global warming leading the news, environmental activists have become bold and demanding. His own caucus is shifting to their view. And a former adversary—a nerd from green-conscious West Hollywood—is threatening to undermine his empire.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, a handful of lawmakers on the House energy committee gathered with energy wonks at 101 Constitution Avenue—Washington's glittering white Taj Mahal of lobbying. The public policy group sponsoring the meeting, the Keystone Center, hosts mediation workshops, and the law-



tal activists who know that—since he is shepherding a big energy bill through the House this year—the future of the Earth rests in his hands. But there's more to perturb the greenies: I ask Dingell whether he's watched that virtually required Earth-tending film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. "No, I didn't," he growls, fixing me with a defiant stare.

Soon enough, unprintables litter our conversation as Congress's oldest member goes off the record to reveal his inner shock jock. His ire is directed at what he calls "these damned environmentalists"—"I have been constantly criticized by them," he says—and at his own colleagues who have been inspired by visions of a global apocalypse. These dire

makers had some toxic issues to work out. Days earlier, Dingell had finally passed around a draft of the committee's big energy-independence legislation, and some of its provisions—promoting coal, eliminating California's tough car mileage standards—so surprised and incensed the committee's second-ranked Democrat, environmental crusader Henry Waxman, that his office launched a letter of protest. "We have serious concerns about the direction the Committee is heading," read Waxman's mutinous pamphlet, which he convinced eleven fellow Democrats to sign. Dingell, according to one signatory, was "not pleased." By the time of the 101 Constitution meeting, committee Democrats felt stuck in the middle. One hapless representative explained, "Well, most of us are trying to duck between Henry Waxman and John Dingell," recalls Philip Sharp, an energy consultant who served in the House in the 1980s. "And I just said, 'Been there, done that!'"

Dingell and Waxman's history of feuding dates back to 1982, right after Dingell's Caesar-like rule over the energy committee began. The hulking Pole is, according to a former colleague, "a truck. He bulldozes into legislation." His staff and budget were the biggest of any committee, and the only picture hanging in the committee lounge was a satellite photo of the Earth: The joke was that it was a depiction of his jurisdiction.

Waxman, the son of Jewish immigrant grocers from Los Angeles, joined the committee when he arrived in the House in 1975. Five-foot-five, gentle, and a bit rumped, Waxman tended more toward "insert[ing] himself into a room," says the former colleague. But, alarmed by L.A.'s pollution, he audaciously took on Big John, squelching his attempt to lower car-emissions standards. In return, Dingell persistently smothered Waxman's efforts on acid rain. Their stand-off became a House legend. Committee member Ed Markey compared it to a movie he had seen in which an 18-year-old

Japanese-American, interned in California, was asked whether he was for the Japanese or the Americans. The boy had answered, "You don't care who wins when your parents are fighting. You just want them to stop."

But they didn't stop until 1989, when George H.W. Bush, who liked to talk about the "need to awaken a new spirit of environmentalism across America," was elected. "Until then, the issue had been, 'Will there be a [pollution] bill?'" recounts George Mitchell, then the Senate's majority leader. "When [Bush] was elected, it became, 'What will be in the bill?'" Waxman entered negotiations in a better position; Dingell worked feverishly to



deliver industry something it could live with. Both men take credit for the eventual compromise, the 1990 Clean Air Act. Colleagues simply called it a "miracle."

But, during the Republican years, changes came to the Hill that left Dingell weakened. Newt Gingrich did away with the committee fiefdoms that had given him free rein, setting a precedent of centralizing power to the leadership. And global warming emerged as a huge issue: This year, the environmental questionnaires distributed to Democratic presidential candidates concentrate chiefly on global warming. The Democratic leadership has jumped right on board. In January, Nancy Pelosi tried to tiptoe around Dingell by forming

a special committee on global warming. Dingell howled—snarking that such a committee would be "as useful as feathers on a fish" and rounding up other committee chairmen to help him defend his turf—and the committee's authority was neutered. But Pelosi is still keeping him on a leash, ordering him to finish a sweeping energy bill by July 4, a date he always thought was unreasonable.

Meanwhile, Waxman's influence has grown. As the new head of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, his intense hearings schedule and matter-of-fact dressing-downs of Bushie ne'er-do-wells have made him an unlikely hero from the Hill to YouTube. On climate, one alternative-energy activist breezily explains that his colleagues conceive of Waxman as "essentially a rival committee chair" to Dingell, an impression some of his House colleagues seem to share. As Washington Representative Jay Inslee, who signed Waxman's letter, tells me, "The planet is in meltdown mode."

AFTER A MEETING with Pelosi last week, the two simply put off much of what was supposed to be in the July 4 bill—including the controversial coal and emissions provisions—until the fall. A staffer passes on Waxman's feelings on the postponement: "I hope our fights are behind us."

But sitting with Dingell in his office a day before they announced the compromise, the prospects for détente sounded grim. "I work with everybody," Dingell says curtly when asked about his relationship with Waxman.

But, by painting Dingell as a tyrant and mounting coups, the green-minded may be hurting their own cause. Dingell likes to make deals—he's fashioned successful ones, he reminds me, on environmental issues ranging from ocean dumping to endangered species. And, despite his open frustration, he is no lion in winter, raging on a lonely throne while his court machinates around him. He is still chairman, and his umbrage affects what the House can accomplish. "I keep telling the environmental leaders, 'Don't piss him off,'" says Sharp, almost pleadingly. "It doesn't serve their interests."

EVE FAIRBANKS



The Secret Life of Dennis

*The loony who's running:
Dennis Kucinich.*

ON A SUNNY Saturday in New Hampshire not long ago, Dennis Kucinich laid out for me the path that would lead him to the presidency. "I think what will happen," he explained, "is that the tremendous demand for integrity and authenticity is going to cause my candidacy to emerge powerfully in the closing weeks of the primary campaign to change it all." The two of us were sitting in the backseat of an SUV driven by an aide, shuttling between campaign events. Small in stature but loud in voice, Kucinich held forth on any number of matters related to his presidential bid, from his opposition to the ongoing war in Iraq to his opposition to a future war in Iran. But the issue that got him most energized was the very fact of the bid itself. "As there's increased awareness that my candidacy represents a real departure from business as usual, that I'm the only authentic peace candidate, that I'm the only one who has real consistency and integrity—" Kucinich paused, seeming to have lost his train of thought. Then, as if he had suddenly retrieved it, he blurted out, "You know, I expect to be the next president of the United States!"

As the underest of underdogs, it's Kucinich's right—and perhaps even his duty—to project an unrealistically outsized aura of confidence. But it would be hard for this confidence to be more misplaced. For one thing, there's the fresh memory of the Ohio Representative's 2004 run for the White House, when the twice-divorced, then-bachelor candidate seemed to spend more time looking for a mate—participating in a "Dating Game"—style competition for potential first ladies—than he did looking for convention delegates. And then there's the reality of Kucinich's current campaign, which is actually in worse shape than the last one.

After all, in 2004, Kucinich managed to raise a respectable \$13 million and had the support of a coterie of lefty celebrities, including Joaquin Phoenix and Danny Glover. This time around, Kucinich has taken in less than \$350,000, according to the most recent campaign finance reports; and his most notable supporter is his new wife, Elizabeth, who—being 31 years younger and about a half-foot taller than her husband—turns many heads when she accompanies him on the campaign trail. (Elizabeth was not, for the record, a contestant in Kucinich's 2004 first lady search.) Worst of



all, Kucinich has watched Mike Gravel fill the gadfly role in the race, stealing his thunder on Iraq and other issues at the two Democratic debates. Indeed, about the only thing as fantastical as Kucinich's claim that he'll be elected president is his claim that he's running in the first place.

KUCINICH'S '08 gambit is less a presidential campaign than it is an elaborate fiction. That's because, aside from participating in the debates, he does virtually none of the things a presidential candidate does.

Yes, Kucinich goes out and campaigns, but only in the narrowest slice of America—generally confining his stumping to vegan restaurants, small colleges, and other places that one finds within the listening area of a community radio station that broadcasts "Democracy Now!" And, as he hopscotches across this Pacifica archipelago, Kucinich doesn't offer much in the way of traditional presidential campaign rhetoric. While he does talk about de-funding the war in Iraq and instituting single-payer health insurance, he spends much of his time dishing out gooey, New Age sentiments—telling people about how "we are interconnected and interdependent" and that "the call for human unity is the call to save the planet and save the world and the universe, and we imbue all of our citizens with the sense of love for each other."

Even the straightforward task of public relations—which, for a money-strapped candidate like Kucinich, is crucial, since his campaign's lifeblood is free media—seems to be an afterthought. A reporter trying to reach the Kucinich campaign gets routed to press secretary David Bright's cell phone—which Bright rarely answers, because, as he explains in his outgoing message, he lives in "rural Maine," where cell phone coverage is spotty.

The notional nature of Kucinich's campaign is strange because, in some

ways, he's in a good position to run a serious one, at least relatively speaking. As the only Democratic candidate who voted against the congressional resolution authorizing the Iraq war—Barack Obama, who opposed the war, was not elected to the U.S. Senate until after the war had started—Kucinich can plausibly argue that history has proved him right. Indeed, it's an argument that he has used to good effect before. After he was elected mayor of Cleveland in 1977 at the age of 31, Kucinich's political career crashed and burned when he refused to sell a city-owned electric utility, which resulted in the city going into default. He lost his reelection bid and went into political exile—moving to California and New Mexico, where he befriended Shirley MacLaine and became a vegan. By the early '90s, however, the correctness of Kucinich's decision not to sell the municipal power company had become apparent—by one calculation, the move had saved its customers more than \$200 million, compared with what they would have paid to a private utility company—and he made his political comeback, winning a seat in the Ohio state Senate in 1994 and then his congressional seat in 1996. His slogan in his 1994 state senate race was "Because he was right" and, in 1996, his campaign logo was a light bulb with the words "Light up Congress."

But that sort of campaign doesn't appear to interest Kucinich much this time around. Rather, his candidacy seems mostly an ego trip and a much-needed diversion. As Brent Larkin, the editorial page editor of *The Cleveland Plain-Dealer* who has been covering Kucinich for 37 years, puts it: "It's got to be more fun for him than doing the serious work of being a congressman in a Rust Belt city that's got a lot of issues."

So Kucinich wages a Potemkin campaign. He declares that he expects to be president while he does nothing that would make that possibility, remote as it already is, closer to being a reality. Every politician, to be sure, lives in a bubble; but Kucinich's campaign exists in its own biosphere. On his recent swing through New Hampshire, he began his day at a high school in the university town of Durham, where a group called "Teaching Peace" was holding a conference. There, amid booths selling "Unscented Peace Vigil Votives" and Native American crafts, he mingled with about 100 people. Many of the adults already seemed to know him. One, a self-described "awakening coach" named Robert Foulkrod, first met Kucinich when he came to a retreat on Foulkrod's Maine farm 20 years ago. "I'm

trying to inspire the city of Nashua to be organized for Dennis,” he explained, before adding, “I’m not organizing it myself. I’m into awakening people. Do you know anyone in Nashua?” Meanwhile, Kucinich’s attempts to win the support of those he didn’t personally know—namely, the high school students in attendance—were largely for naught. “I’m not old enough to vote,” one explained apologetically after Kucinich asked for her support. “But you’re old enough to influence thousands!” he pleaded in response.

The rest of his day was spent on similar endeavors—preaching to the politically converted or the politically irrelevant or, in many instances, both. But, in the afternoon, Kucinich finally participated in an event that seemed to bear some relation to a real presidential campaign. A group of about 20 retired generals and admirals—with approximately 700 years of combined military experience between them—had gathered at the Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord and were meeting with any presidential candidate who wanted to discuss U.S. detention and interrogation policies. Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden had taken them up on the offer, and, at the last minute, so did Kucinich. Arriving 30 minutes late for the meeting, the candidate hurried into a conference room, where, for the next hour, he laid out his foreign policy.

The meeting had a decidedly Model United Nations feel, with the group of 60-something white men wearing service academy rings pretending they were interested in what Kucinich would do as president, and Kucinich pretending that he would one day be president. But, when it was over, it seemed that no harm had been done by the military men’s small courtesy of indulging a man who’d never be commander-in-chief. No harm, that is, until a young aide noticed me and my tape recorder and asked if I was a reporter. When I said I was, all hell broke loose. The meeting was supposed to be off-the-record, no press allowed. Every candidate had been provided a long set of instructions that explicitly spelled out that stipulation. And every candidate had abided by them—except for Kucinich, whose campaign had breezily invited me into the session. After an hour of furious negotiation with the meeting’s organizers, I agreed not to write about what was said in the meeting, since it wasn’t the fault of the retired generals that I’d been let in. But the episode made one thing clear: Taking Dennis Kucinich’s presidential campaign seriously will bring you nothing but grief.

JASON ZENGERLE



Odd Man Out

*The loony who’s staying home:
Lyndon LaRouche.*

THE TOWN OF Round Hill, Virginia, (population 500, more cows than people) is probably not the right place to build a global political empire. But Lyndon LaRouche—conspiracy theorist, convicted felon, international cult leader, and eight-time failed presidential candidate—has selected it nonetheless. Pinched between a hayfield, a bison farm, and—locals brag—the fishing pond where a resident caught the largest smallmouth bass in the county, lies the three-story farmhouse set on the few dozen acres that LaRouche calls home. It’s a place that feels like a cross

between a pastoral poem and an outpost on the Maginot Line: The long gravel path that leads up to the house is lined by blossoming and well-groomed dogwoods—a welcoming sight, until you see the two security cameras, in green and red, attached to branches near the gate. Neighbors say that LaRouche, always on the lookout for brainwashed assassins, still has armed guards watching over the property, day and night.

Predictably, LaRouche doesn’t do interviews in person. His staff says the security risks are too great. But he did agree to a telephone interview, and, after speaking with him, the Round Hill farm takes on a different feel: that of a retirement estate—a regular Mount Vernon for a man who has always ranked him-

self with the heavyweights of U.S. history. ("Oh, there's no question about it," he told *The Washington Post* in 1980. "I am the leading economist of the century.") After running in every presidential election since 1976—and supporting everything from colonizing Mars, to bringing back the gold standard, to building a giant land bridge across the Bering Strait—LaRouche has decided not to go in for a ninth bid in 2008. "I've stepped out of the presidential campaign," he grumbles with an unexpected New England lilt. "After all, I'm close to eighty-five now. And a candidate should have at least eight years [left] before running for the presidency of the United States."

The timing might seem strange, since, if there's one thing the 2008 election has attracted, it's an apparently infinite supply of oddball (and long-shot) candidates. There is Ron Paul, a Texas representative nicknamed "Dr. No" for his habit of voting against almost every spending bill that crosses his desk. And there is Mike Gravel, a 77-year-old former Alaskan senator who hasn't held an elected office since 1981. (Asked after the first Democratic debate where he's been for the last 25 years, Gravel replied, "Under a rock.") But, for LaRouche, it seems fitting that his strange political tale should have a plot twist in the final chapter. The election in which everyone is getting in is the one in which LaRouche is finally, after a three-decade presidential marathon, getting out.

NOT THAT everything has changed. Politics is the very first thing LaRouche brings up in conversation, although his politics are not so much left or right as they are a conspiratorial mishmash of anxieties and accusations. His enemies list has had a large and distinguished membership—it's probably the only one to include Henry Kissinger, Harry Truman, Queen Elizabeth II, Jane Fonda, and most nineteenth-century British empiricists—but lately it's focused almost exclusively on Al Gore, whose anti-global warming crusade he treats with special contempt. LaRouche, his colleagues say, is unambiguously "pro-civilization" and regards anything that hinders growth as a threat to life as we know it. "If you do what [Gore] says you should do, or even approximate it, you're going to destroy the possibility of civilization," LaRouche warns. "We could go into a dark age."

The prospect of darker times is a subject LaRouche brings up a lot. In the course of an hour-long conversation, he warns that "the worst financial crisis in

modern history [is] in the process of hitting" and "the world financial monetary system" is "disintegrating very rapidly"; that "civilization may not be here when we come to our senses"; and, rather cryptically, that we are approaching a "Tower of Babel." And, just as he has done for decades, LaRouche maintains that he is the only one with the qualifications to save us from an unappealing fate. "My personal identification will go back to ancient Greece, to Plato and so forth, but more immediately to Franklin Roosevelt's tradition, which was essentially to save civilization from a nightmare."

But, with electoral options now off the table, LaRouche is fending off the nightmare by pouring his inimitable skills into something new: nurturing the eponymous LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), an effort to enlist the support of college-age men and women that he started in the late '90s. After being released from prison in 1994—five years earlier, he was convicted of running a massive mail-fraud scheme—LaRouche found that many of his original associates had abandoned him. Most of the turncoats were baby-boomers, so LaRouche began writing off the entire generation as "generally crazy" and saving his affection for the young, whom he sees as filled with revolutionary promise. Of course, it doesn't hurt that most of the impressionable college students LaRouche recruits are too young to remember that he spent five years in prison for mail fraud.

For some observers, the LYM is a hilarious failure. The most press the group received was for repeatedly harassing Joe Lieberman on the campaign trail in 2006 (a role that LaRouche describes as "historically significant"), and the most contact the average American will ever have with the organization is seeing a group of kids singing on a street corner or distributing pamphlets, sometimes with racy titles like "Children of Satan III: The Sexual Congress for Cultural Fascism." But the relative success of recruiting—most estimates put membership at a few thousand—has worried others more than any of his legal infractions from the '80s. Many of the LaRouche youth drop out of college to work for the movement full-time, and most move into crowded and filthy group housing, where they work long hours distributing literature and making fund-raising phone calls. A number of colleges now warn incoming students about the group.

Given this less than flattering press, it's not easy to see how LaRouche keeps recruiting members and raising dollars. But somehow, despite age and the

odds, he does. During the 2004 election, he raised close to \$9 million—far more than the comparatively mainstream Dennis Kucinich or Al Sharpton—and former followers all describe the same weirdly hypnotic power. "He's a very tall guy, very imposing, and he can drop so many names—Plato, Leibniz, Kepler, on and on," says one former devotee. "You have no idea what the fuck he's talking about, yet you think he's a genius."

It's a description LaRouche is perfectly happy to cultivate, especially since he is now hard at work on a new "educational program" for the LYM—which, he says, starts with "questions of the Pythagoreans," then dips into "[Carl Friedrich] Gauss's 1799 doctoral dissertation," and then moves on to the work of nineteenth-century German mathematician Bernhard Riemann. "If you don't understand Riemannian dynamics," intones LaRouche, "you don't know how economies work." He chose the curriculum based on "the kind of things that a leading cadre of economists"—like himself—"should have mastered."

BUT, DESPITE escaping the rigamarole of electoral politics, the 2008 election is never far from LaRouche's mind, and he claims to be in "close consultation" with a number of Democratic presidential campaigns. (As in past years, every Democratic campaign denies this: The party has never recognized LaRouche, and a 2004 DNC letter cited his "explicitly racist and anti-Semitic" beliefs as a reason.) But LaRouche—who has, despite the restrained reception, called himself a Democrat for almost 30 years—isn't ready to commit to one candidate just yet. John Edwards? "Too shallow." Barack Obama? "He's owned by the Chicago Board of Trade." Hillary Clinton? "Hillary Clinton is a very intelligent person who I like, but I wouldn't pick her for president. She's too fly-off-the-handle." Is there anyone worth backing?

LaRouche pauses. "I would probably end up being stuck with Hillary Clinton, who I do not think is qualified to be president," he admits. There is, in the end, only one person who can do the job. "I have the qualities," he sighs. "But I'm a bit old. . . . My job is to create the image of what that president should be," and, he says, "have somebody step into those shoes." LaRouche is pretty sure he can deliver. "I'm likely to be around, unless somebody kills me."

CONOR CLARKE

Conor Clarke is an editor in the *GUARDIAN's* Washington bureau.

Shticko

It's no fun to agree with Michael Moore.

THE WARNINGS went out in a 2004 company newsletter: Watch out for “a scruffy guy in a baseball cap.” The scruffy guy was Michael Moore and the company was pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline, whose executives had gotten wind of Moore’s new project: a documentary about the health care system called *Sicko*. The executives figured it was only a matter of time before Moore showed up on their doorstep, camera in hand—if he hadn’t already. “We have six business centers nationwide,” a Glaxo official confided to the *Los Angeles Times*, “all of which report sightings.”

Earlier this month, when I got my first glimpse of *Sicko*, I felt similar trepidation, though for rather different reasons. My bias in watching Moore’s film is that, in the broad sense, I agree with him. I’ve been writing about the flaws of the U.S. health care system, and the need for universal health insurance, for nearly a decade now. (And, yes, I recently wrote a book with almost the exact same title as Moore’s movie—*Sick*—although I’m pretty sure I thought of it first.) But Moore has not always been the most intellectually rigorous storyteller—or, for liberals, the most useful ally. *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore’s attack on the Bush administration and the Iraq war, may be wildly popular among Bush-haters and the most financially successful documentary ever. But a lot of people think it also ended up helping Bush win reelection, by trading in unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and firing up the Republican base. As Jon Feltheimer, the CEO of Lion’s Gate Films, told *Vanity Fair*, “I’ve been told a number of times [by Republicans], ‘Isn’t it great what you’ve done for the party?’”

As *Sicko* rolled, it did little to allay my fears. I spotted plenty of intellectual dishonesties and arguments without context—enough, surely, to keep right-wing truth squads (and some left-wing ones) busy for weeks. Moore also couldn’t help but stick in unrelated jabs about the Bush administration’s efforts to fight terrorism and insisted on hyping Cuba’s medical system—an awfully poor way to counter the generations-old slander that universal health care is tantamount to “socialized medicine.”

Still, by the time the final credits ran, it was hard to get too worked up about all of that. Because, beyond all the grandstanding and political theater, the movie actually made a compelling argument about what’s wrong with U.S. health care and how to fix it. *Sicko* got a lot of



the little things wrong. But it got most of the big things right.

WHEN MOORE was filming *Sicko*, he frequently told people that he was filming a comedy about the 45 million Americans who don’t have health insurance—people who represent the most glaring failure of U.S. health care. And, in fact, the opening sequence of his movie portrays two people in precisely that situation—one of whom is Rick, who accidentally sawed off the tops of two fingers while working at home. With no insurance to pay the bill and limited funds at his disposal, he has to choose whether to have the hospital reattach his middle finger for \$60,000 or his ring finger for \$12,000. (He chooses the ring finger.)

But, as Moore quickly explains, uninsured Americans aren’t the primary subject of his film. Instead, he announces to the backdrop of 1950s music and newsreel footage, he’s chosen to focus on the rest of America, the people who do have insurance and the hardship many of them go through anyway. He does so primarily by telling the stories of hapless victims, deftly weaving farce and tragedy. We hear both from a woman who gets stuck with an ambulance bill because she didn’t clear the charge with her insurer before losing consciousness during a car accident and from the widow of Tracy Pierce, who died after his insurer denied a potentially life-saving bone-marrow transplant for his kidney cancer.

Moore isn’t aiming for balance: Officials defending the health care industry don’t get any airtime. Instead, Moore

gives us the views of former insiders turned whistleblowers—like Linda Peeno, former medical director at the HMO Humana. Peeno stopped working there in the late ’80s after becoming disgusted with pressure to deny coverage—including for a heart transplant for a man who otherwise might have lived. Moore also introduces viewers to Lee Einer, whose job at a major insurance carrier (Moore doesn’t say which) was to pore over insurance applications retroactively, focusing on people with large claims in order to find evidence that they had hidden previous conditions. As Einer explains, it was widely understood that intent to mislead was irrelevant; the companies just wanted excuses to avoid paying bills. (To illustrate what this means in practice, Moore also tells the story of a woman whose carrier pulled coverage after an operation, because on her application she didn’t mention a past yeast infection.)

Moore wants to weave these tales into an indictment of the idea that for-profit companies can be counted upon to provide Americans with affordable medical care. But that’s a complicated argument to make. Even an intellectually rigorous filmmaker would have to cut a few corners; Moore cuts many.

Sometimes, for example, there are good reasons to deny coverage of experimental treatments. In the 1990s, HMOs caught a lot of grief for denying bone-marrow transplants to breast cancer victims. Years later, studies showed the treatments—which are both expensive and painful—worked in only

MAX WHITTAKER/REUTERS/LANDOW

a tiny fraction of special cases. Would the bone-marrow transplant denied to Pierce have made a difference? It seems unlikely. Experts told me that the treatment never made it past the experimental phase because of ineffectiveness and harmful side-effects.

But, while not every HMO treatment denial bears second-guessing, many do: During the '90s, peer-reviewed studies showed that insurance companies were cutting costs in ways that routinely jeopardized patient care. Nor is there any doubt that insurers try desperately to avoid covering people with serious medical conditions: Following exposés by Lisa Girion in the *Los Angeles Times*, California officials investigated BlueCross for precisely the kind of practices Lee Einer describes, eventually fining the insurer \$1 million because it was rescinding coverage without even asking policy-holders about supposed misrepresentations. Although Wellpoint, the parent company of Blue Cross, denied wrongdoing, it also promised to change its cancellation procedures.

STILL, WHILE IT'S easy to beat up on insurance companies that deny coverage—or drug companies that charge a lot of money, or employers that don't offer their workers benefits—the truth is that they're all acting rationally. They're businesses, after all, and businesses are designed to make profits—which, it turns out, isn't always in the best of interests of people who are sick. If you want a different outcome, you need to come up with a different system, one that starts by guaranteeing every single person health insurance and making sure that insurance includes generous benefits.

Moore spends the second half of his film concentrating on systems abroad that do precisely this. Over the years, opponents of universal health care have scared middle-

class voters into thinking universal coverage means long lines and substandard care. Moore responds by reprising his familiar man-on-the-street role, taking his cameras for a lively jaunt through some of these countries.

He starts with Great Britain and Canada, focusing on what is undoubtedly their chief virtue: affordability. Inside a British hospital, Moore prowls the halls, looking for a place to pay bills. But, when he finally finds the cashier, he learns that this cashier is there not to take money but to give it away, in case people need money for transport home. (Apparently, that's covered under British national health insurance.)

Nobody in the United States seriously proposes recreating the British or Canadian systems here—in part because, as critics charge and Moore ignores, they really do have waiting lines. A closer model for the United States would be France, which doesn't have that problem and which—thankfully—also merits considerable screen time in Moore's movie. As Paul Dutton explains in a new book called *Differential Diagnoses*, the French prize individual liberty, so they created an insurance system that, today, allows free choice of doctor and offers highly advanced medical care to those who need it. One of this system's most appealing features, which Moore showcases, is the availability of 24-hour house-call service via a company called SOS Médecins. (Moore travels along with one of the company's doctors as he rides around Paris one night, taking dispatch calls like a taxi driver and then administering at-home medical care to a young man with some kind of stomach problem.)

All of this does cost money, naturally, and Moore acknowledges what many as-



sume is the French system's big drawback: its high taxes. But Moore also provides the same answer that any good policy wonk (including yours truly) would: They pay more in taxes but less in private insurance. In fact, the French system, like every other one

in the rest of the developed world, costs less than ours overall.

The French like their system a lot—more than the citizens of any other country, including the United States, if you believe the opinion polls. The World Health Organization likes it a lot, too: It has ranked France's system tops in the world. But that isn't stopping critics from attacking it. In a pre-buttal of *Sicko* that appeared in the *New York Post*, the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner warned last week that Moore missed the real problem in France: its shortage of high-tech care.

This was news to me. I spent a lot of time researching France when I wrote my book, and I never heard anything about shortages of high-tech care. I asked Victor Rodwin of New York University, this country's leading expert on the French health care system, if he had ever heard of such shortages. He hadn't, either.

In the interest of fairness, I decided I would ask Tanner himself: What was his evidence? He said the French government was starting to tighten access to specialists. Well, sure—but it's still a far cry from what managed care has done in this country for years. He also said that France has fewer MRIs and CT scanners than the United States, which is very true and very irrelevant. Most experts think we have far more than we need here. If there were real shortages in France, there would be long queues to use them, and there's no evidence of this, either.

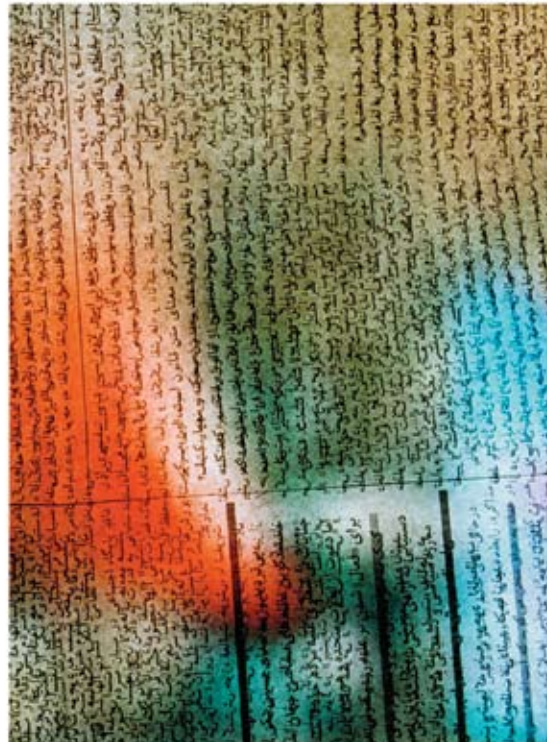
Tanner's op-ed was a good reminder of the proper context for considering *Sicko*—the fact that opponents of universal health care have been spewing half-truths and outright falsehoods for decades. If anything, the proponents of universal health care have probably been *too* honest, getting so caught up in nuance and policy accuracy that they undermine the very real moral power of their own argument. As another great health care debate begins, it's worth remembering that the fundamental challenge isn't technical. We have plenty of good ideas for achieving universal coverage. The challenge is political. Our side needs some passion and, yes, perhaps a little simplicity, too. That's what Moore has supplied. No wonder the health care industry is spooked.

JONATHAN COHN

WASHINGTON READ: NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT

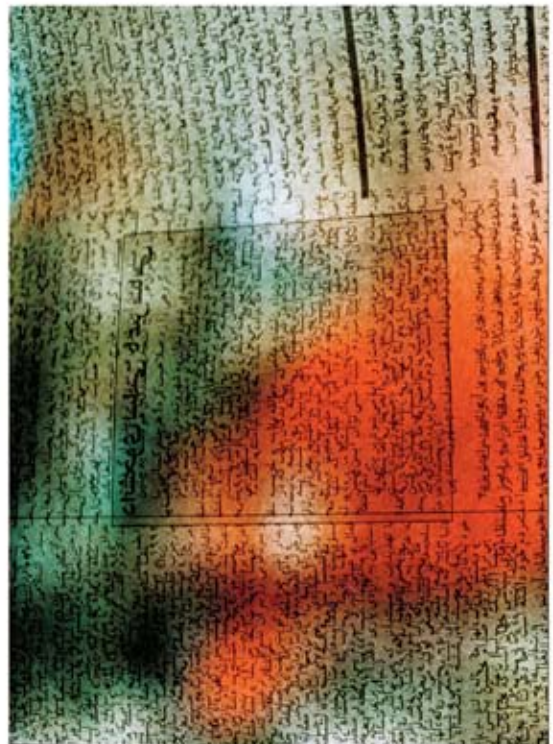
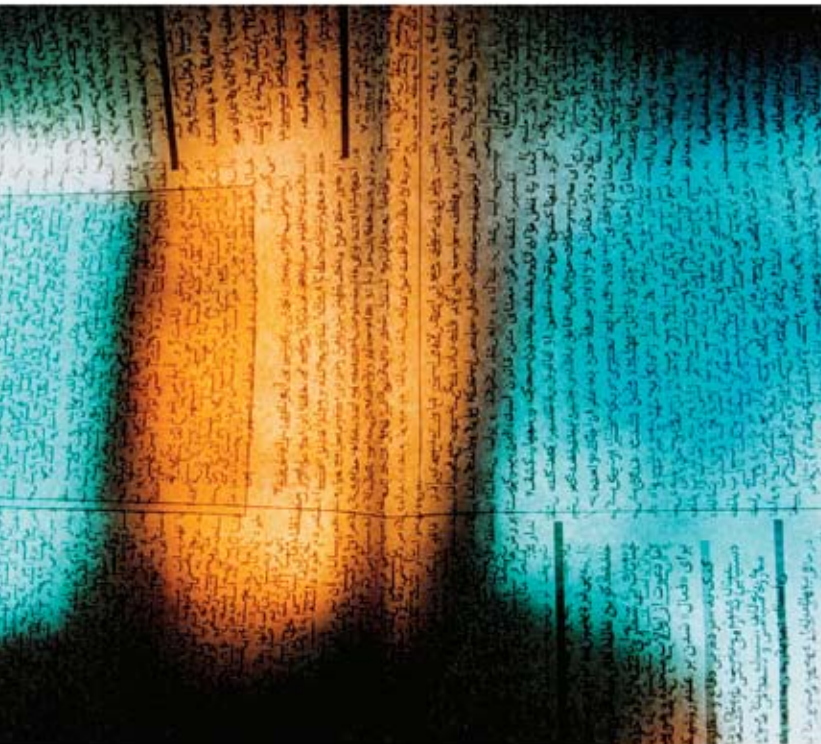
THE RECORDS PROVIDED by the Smithsonian show that from 2000 through 2006 Mr. [Lawrence] Small and Sheila P. Burke, the current Deputy Secretary, were absent from the Smithsonian for about 400 and 550 work days, respectively, as a result of vacation time and time spent serving on corporate and other boards and performing other non-Smithsonian-related duties. This level of absenteeism was not prohibited by the Smithsonian leave policy because Mr. Small and Ms. Burke were allowed unlimited leave. Mr. Small appears to have taken nearly 70 weeks of vacation over his seven years (or nearly 10 weeks per year). In addition, he spent 64 business days serving on for-profit corporate boards for which he earned approximately \$642,925 in cash compensation, \$3.3 million in stock compensation and \$1.8 million in stock option compensation."

—From an independent report detailing the excesses and incompetence of former Smithsonian chief Lawrence Small, who stepped down in March



In the Shadows of Mullahs

Exploring themes of censorship, the Islamic ban on representation, and the conflicts between Persian history and Muslim history, these photos from *PERSIAN VISIONS*, a traveling show of contemporary Iranian photography, illuminate the paradoxes of modern life in a theocracy. Clockwise from right: Bahman Jalali, "Image of Imagination 3"; Sadeqh Tirafkan, from "Persepolis"; Mehran Mohajer, "TV. Series 1 (The Light Is Out The Room Is Dark)"; Ahmad Nateghi, "Untitled"; Koroush Adim, "Revelations 1."





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Parent Trap

How Mitt Romney un-became his father.

JONATHAN COHN

ON JULY 8, 1964, 17-year-old Mitt Romney slipped into a front-row seat at a San Francisco hotel ballroom. The start of the Republican National Convention was just days away, and tensions in the room were high—not over the choice of nominee (Barry Goldwater had already locked up enough delegates) but over the ideological future of the party. Inside the ballroom, the committee in charge of writing the party platform was under attack from a small band of dissenters determined to make one final stand against the radical conservatism of Goldwater and his supporters. And one of the most prominent dissenters was Mitt's father, George Romney.

By 1964, the first-term Michigan governor had distinguished himself as a straight-talker who disdained partisanship. He had made such an impression on his fellow moderates that days later, at the convention, Gerald Ford would make the symbolic gesture of nominating Romney from the floor, saying of his fellow Michigander that “he has never let the temporary glitter of expediency obscure the path which his integrity dictated he must follow.” When Romney's turn to speak before the platform committee came, he seized it—challenging the group, which was packed with Goldwater delegates, to accept language endorsing federal civil rights initiatives and the importance of labor unions, and, more generally, to distance the party from some of the right-wing extremists who had backed Goldwater. As Mitt looked on attentively, his father warned the group that “there is no place in either of our parties for the purveyors of hate.”

The moment was one of great futility: The committee, which greeted the speech with polite but tepid applause, rejected the amendments, just as the full convention would later turn away efforts by Romney and his supporters to introduce those amendments from the floor. But, against this backdrop, Romney's speech conveyed the noble defense of a principled stand. That is how, over 40 years later, his son remembers it. “I watched that with great interest,” Romney told me earlier this spring. “He believed that the Republican Party was aligning itself as an opponent of civil rights and was connecting with the extreme elements of the John Birch Society and felt that Goldwater was wrong in taking the party in that direction. He was passionate about that.”

We were sitting in the green room of CNN's Los Angeles studios, just after Mitt's appearance on “Larry King Live” during a March fund-raising trip to California. He had just turned 60, making him roughly the same age his father was during the 1964 convention—and the similarities between the two are even more striking up-close than they had been the previous times I had seen him, either on television or before large crowds. Mitt has the same chiseled features as his father: the squared-off jaw and the deeply set eyes, plus the nose with impossibly perfect angles. And, although Mitt's words come out more slowly and more deliberately than the ones I heard on recordings of his father, the voice itself has an unmistakably familiar ring to it—crisp, deep, and forceful. “I never saw myself being like my

Dad,” Mitt joked during our conversation. “Now that I'm older, I see a tape of myself giving a speech, I say, ‘Holy cow, I'm turning in to my Dad.’ I look like him a lot. I talk like him a lot. The things I value are very much the things he valued.”

The similarities between Mitt and his father go well beyond appearances. He shares his father's competitive streak, his strong sense of political ambition. Twelve years after George's death, Mitt still sees him as a role model, describing him as “the definition of a successful human.” His admiration for his father's approach to politics surfaced several times during our interview. When I asked him to explain why he had abandoned business for politics, for example, he didn't talk about crusading to save the United States from the left. Instead, he told me, “It's a family gene. There's something in the Romney makeup that longs to be able to make a difference, to make a contribution. ... There's almost an obligation to step forward.”

Until recently, Mitt Romney did indeed seem to be his father's son—with a life that evinced noblesse oblige and a political tendency toward principled moderation. But, in the course of his presidential campaign, Romney has called the sincerity of those poses into doubt, flamboyantly altering seemingly bedrock positions on abortion and stem-cell research and positioning himself as a right-wing crusader. During our interview, Romney methodically went through these positions, endeavoring to explain the switches as a natural and genuine evolution of thought—all proof, he said, that “I'm conservative.”

Mitt Romney's makeover suggests a far more piercing critique than mere flip-flopping: the charge of filial betrayal, of running a campaign that would earn paternal disapproval were George still alive. At first glance, it's a charge that rings true. Like all father-son relationships, of course, it's also far more complicated than that. And these complications aren't psycho-biographical digressions but essential to answering the question: Despite all his twists and turns, could Mitt Romney make a good president?

GEORGE ROMNEY's Mormon upbringing was a big influence in shaping the worldview that he passed down to Mitt. George's great-grandfather was an original Mormon apostle named Parley Pratt, who followed Brigham Young to Utah and was killed in 1857 by the disgruntled ex-husband of one of his wives. When the federal government began to crack down on polygamy, George's grandparents fled to Mexico. In 1907, George was born in Chihuahua, and, five years later, during the Mexican revolution, the Romney family fled back to the U.S., eventually settling in Salt Lake City.

George grew up devout but poor—his father was a builder who declared bankruptcy several times. But he developed a sense of the world—not only through his peripatetic family history but through his church mission to England in 1927. It was an experience that helped him hone his political skills. “I've seen pictures of George standing, holding on to a statue in Hyde Park, speaking to a crowd,” says Charles Harmon, one of George Romney's old political advisers. “It's tough—

people shouting at you, ridiculing you, while you're trying to sell your beliefs. I always felt he was a super salesman. And he got some of that training from his missionary work."

After working his way through college, but never finishing his studies, George got his first taste of U.S. politics as an aide to Democratic Massachusetts Senator David Walsh. But he had mainly come to Washington, D.C., because his future wife Lenore's family was there, and, after following her back and forth to the West Coast, where she was trying to build a movie career, the couple settled in Detroit. There, Romney worked his way up through the company that eventually became the American Motors Corporation—and Detroit's fourth-biggest automaker. He became best known for his role promoting the AMC Rambler, a compact vehicle that offered higher fuel efficiency and a lower sticker price than most U.S. cars. Romney sold Ramblers with the same vigor he had once used to sell Mormonism, attacking the Big Three as dinosaurs. He eventually climbed all the way to the position of president.

Mitt was George and Lenore Romney's fourth child—born in 1947, a few years before George took over at AMC and with a six-year separation to his next-closest sibling, Scott. Lenore's pregnancy had come as a surprise—the couple had given up on conceiving again—and the difficult childbirth left Lenore bedridden for a year. Partly as a result, Mitt, from a very young age, developed an especially close relationship with his father—a relationship that would get even closer later in life, once the older children left home for college and Mitt had his parents to himself.

George Romney was an outsider who had made it into the elite on his own terms (he remained an active member of the Mormon Church throughout his life). To help his children accomplish this same feat, he practiced two main principles of childrearing. One was to prepare them intellectually by engaging them in adult conversation—and Mitt, as the last arrival, was part of those conversations from a very young age. "I was the baby of the family, so I got all the years of experience of listening to people debate the issues, talk about the future," Mitt recalls. According to Scott, Mitt consistently lobbed the smartest, most pointed inquiries at their father. "Dad would gather us around, in the living room, the four kids and mom," Scott says. "My sisters and I would say, 'That sounds great.' And Mitt would say ... 'Dad, if these Ameri-

can Motors cars are so great, why doesn't anybody buy one?'"

George's other principle was to give his children a healthy sense of humility, particularly when it came to financial circumstances. George credited his own success to his strong work ethic—and he wanted his children to have it, too. So, even though the Romneys lived on a four-acre plot in the posh Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills, George insisted the children do extensive chores and then, during the summers, take real jobs outside the house—which, in Mitt's case, meant working as a security guard at a Chrysler plant one summer. "On weekends, those guys had a set of chores, and there wasn't a whole lot of extra time," recalls Phillip Maxwell, who first got to know Mitt when they were in the fourth grade together. "Their father was a real taskmaster—very fair, but he instilled real discipline."

George prepared Mitt for leadership in one other key way: by sending him to Cranbrook, the elite private academy that sprawls across 319 lush acres not far from the Romneys' Bloomfield home. Established in the 1930s, Cranbrook has trained generations of students in classical preparatory style—with intensive Latin, accelerated mathematics, and weekly writing assignments from seventh grade on. Its seniors routinely win admission to the nation's top colleges, and among its alumni are former Senator Alan Simpson and intellectual-turned-dissident Daniel Ellsberg, of Pentagon Papers fame.

But, despite his intellectual curiosity at home, Mitt wasn't a standout for most of his years at Cranbrook, which he attended from seventh to twelfth grades. Classmates describe him as a B-plus student who was happy to cede academic achievement to others. He was active in the Blue Key Club, a service organization that shepherded visitors around campus, and the Homecoming Committee. But he wasn't the student class president or leader of the prestigious debate society. Nor was he cut out for the football or the hockey teams, which perennially won state championships. He made do as a team manager for the hockey squad—and, since Cranbrook was an all-boys school, as a cheerleader. "He wasn't an athlete, which was tough on him, because other members of his family were," says Philip Maxwell. "He just wasn't coordinated in that way." Other classmates remember Mitt as young for his age emotionally, at least by Cranbrook standards. They say he was more popular than admired, a "happy-go-lucky guy" known less for his achievements than

his pranks—like the time he and some friends borrowed a state trooper's uniform from his father's security detail and pulled over students from the neighboring girls' school.

It was shortly after Mitt started at Cranbrook that George got into politics: first as the head of a committee to rescue the Detroit public schools; then as the head of an organization trying to rewrite the antiquated state constitution. That work led to his successful run for the governor's office, which took place when Mitt was in ninth grade and landed George on the cover of *Time*, fueling widespread speculation about a future in national politics. Once in office, George Romney quickly compiled accomplishments, including passage of the new constitution, enactment of a new minimum-wage law (something the Democrats had wanted for more than 25 years but could never make happen), and turning an \$80 million budget deficit into a \$100 million surplus.

Some classmates speculate that George's looming presence may have been what made Mitt so quick to retreat to the safety of humor. Eric Muirhead—a classmate who now teaches writing at San Jacinto College in Texas—says that, when students wanted to make fun of Mitt, they would say things like, "He's no George Romney." "I had the impression that Mitt was struggling for respect when he was at Cranbrook," Muirhead adds. "Mitt suffered because of his father's importance."

Muirhead admits that he didn't think much of Mitt's mettle, either—until senior year, when Mitt suddenly seemed a lot more serious about himself and decided to go out for the cross-country team. Although Mitt had never run track before, Muirhead, who was the team's captain, and the rest of the team were quickly impressed with Mitt's work ethic—so impressed, in fact, that when Muirhead fell ill before one of the season's first meets, he told the coach Mitt should take the open slot.

The race began and, as expected, Mitt fell behind the pack. Muirhead figured it wouldn't affect the end result. Given the strength of Cranbrook's top runners, the team would still win, just as long as Mitt actually finished. But, as Mitt neared the end, he was gasping for breath. And, as he staggered through the final stretch, along a track circling the football field, he fell onto his hands and knees. The crowd, there for the homecoming football game, stood up as one—including Lenore Romney, who'd come to see her son's first race. Muirhead ran out to help, but Mitt refused. "He got up, staggered,



Romney père and fils with some of the clan after Mitt's 1994 debate with Ted Kennedy.

and fell again," Muirhead says. "He kept getting up, kept falling, but kept shouting at us—kept telling us not to touch him. I don't know how many times he fell, but he finished, he made his way around that track, and he got an ovation like I never heard. He won a lot of people's respect that day. ... In all my years, I never saw a guttier performance."

AFTER ONE YEAR at Stanford, in June 1966, Mitt left for Paris, where he was assigned to Le Havre, on the northern French coast, to begin his two-and-a-half-year Mormon mission. In France, Romney was out of his father's shadow for the first time, and friends say he came into his own. His middle-aged mission president tapped him early as a leader and made him responsible for more than 50 of his fellow missionaries. When the 1968 student strikes set in, Romney threw himself into crisis-management mode—distributing funds, food, and good cheer to his frequently discouraged charges. "You've got young men a couple of thousand miles away from home, not getting communication, and oftentimes one hundred fifty miles from the mission headquarters, too," says Dane McBride, who served alongside Romney in France. "It's not natural for young men to put other young men on a pedestal, but I really admired his perceptiveness and his ability to lead and to lift and to reassure in very uncertain times."

At the same time that Mitt began to shine as a leader, his father's political career began to crumble. After Goldwater's disastrous defeat, Romney emerged as the front-runner to be the next Republican nominee for president. By late 1966, one poll showed Romney beating Lyndon Johnson in a hypothetical match-up. But Romney began to stumble on Vietnam, criticizing the war and then declaring his full-throated opposition. When asked by a TV interviewer why he had supported it in the first place, Romney said he had gotten a "brainwashing" from the military. His poll numbers plummeted. By the spring of 1968, he was out of the race altogether.

Mitt has always said that his father had no regrets about the race—that he had given it his best shot and spoken his mind. But, soon after, Mitt's own ambition kicked into overdrive. After returning from France, he married his high-school sweetheart, Ann Davies, and transferred from Stanford to Brigham Young University, eventually graduating as valedictorian. Mitt wanted to attend business school next, but his father hoped he'd pursue a degree in law. So Mitt compromised by pursuing both at Harvard, completing a joint degree.

Romney overlapped with another future politician there—one George W. Bush. But the two did not know each other, and, really, their experiences could not have been more different. While Bush was lounging his way through, coasting on his family's reputation, Rom-

ney was hitting the books. Once again, he finished near the top of his class—and, upon graduation, he had his choice of jobs in industry. Until that time, Mitt always figured he would go into the auto industry, like his father. (As Romney told *The American Spectator*, "I did not think I was going to be in politics. ... I hoped to be head of Ford or American Motors or General Motors.") But, by that time, a new opportunity was opening up for the nation's best and brightest: management consulting. These firms recruited from the top tier of the top graduate schools and sought to create an army of analysts who could bring their unique intelligence to bear on a wide variety of businesses, rather than just one. Romney liked the sound of that challenge and accepted an offer from Boston Consulting Group, a pioneer in the field. A few years later, he joined a group of BCG partners who had broken with the firm to establish a new one, called Bain.

Mitt's knack for management would soon make him legendary throughout the business community. Here, all the leadership skills he had honed over the years served him well: He developed a reputation for unusually diligent research and analysis—for maintaining an open mind and calling in conflicting points of view. Not only did this produce better decisions, it also disarmed would-be critics. "He's quite good at managing big egos," says James Bailey, another Cranbrook classmate who, years later, ended up collaborating with Mitt on business dealings in Boston. "He's really an extraordinary manager, deserving of all the praise he gets." Eventually, Romney spun off an operation from within Bain, called Bain Capital—which invested money in its projects, effectively becoming its own venture-capital firm. The result was a litany of now-famous business success stories: Brookstone, Domino's Pizza, and Staples.

GEORGE ROMNEY had always said the ideal time to run for public office was after you had achieved financial independence and your children were old enough to put up with the loss of privacy. So, in 1994, when Republican officials from Massachusetts began putting out feelers for someone to run against Ted Kennedy, Mitt said he was interested. It would be an incredibly daunting race in which to make his political debut: While Bill Clinton's troubles had improved prospects for Republicans in the rest of country, unseating Ted Kennedy in Massachusetts was said to be impossible. Still, Romney did have one

secret weapon: his father, who knew a thing or two about long-shot bids.

George Romney had also started his political career by challenging a popular Democrat in an overwhelmingly Democratic state. And a key to his victory was his ability to run as a fiercely independent Republican. He complained about labor's influence over the Democratic Party, but he also complained about business's influence over the Republicans. When the organizers of Detroit's Labor Day parade refused to let him participate, George simply showed up and marched at the front of the line, coat slung over his shoulder. When Mitt decided to run for governor, George helped lead the charge. He began by serving as an emissary to Republican power-brokers and as Mitt's *de facto* communications director: "He's better than the chip off the old block because he's had better preparation than I," George would tell audiences. And, once Mitt got his party's nomination, George moved in with Mitt and his family for six months. When it was time to hit the road, George and Ann would go off campaigning in one direction, while Mitt went off in another. Then they would return to confer some more over strategy. "We didn't disagree," Mitt recalls. "We saw issues in a very similar way."

Substantively speaking, Mitt's campaign in 1994 closely resembled the runs George made in the '60s. While he had clearly identified himself as a Republican by this point, he did not position himself as an ideologue. He attacked Kennedy by making him a proxy for wasteful spending and various episodes of Democratic Party corruption. "I think it's important to have people who can and will be able to challenge the country on ethics and principles," Romney said in his announcement speech. But he did not propose an all-out assault on the welfare state. Although personally opposed to abortion, Romney said it should be legal, recalling how a close family friend had died from an illegal abortion. He even reached out to groups representing gay voters, touting his support for domestic partnership rights and echoing his father's words from 1964. When the local gay newspaper, *Bay Windows*, asked Romney about Jesse Helms and Pat Robertson, he replied, "I think that extremists who would force their views on the party and try to shape the party are making a mistake."

Romney ran a strong campaign, at one point passing Kennedy in the polls. And, while he tried to manage expectations, his father talked them up—hinting at aspirations for his son that went beyond Massachusetts. A Romney win "is

bound to get national attention," George reminded people. But Kennedy eventually came back, seizing on Romney's personal beliefs about abortion and using them to make a still-devastating indictment: "He's not pro-choice, he's not anti-choice, he's multiple choice." George Romney tried to enlist other members of the Romney clan to help the campaign, thinking they could fan out across the state as Mitt's emissaries in the closing weeks. But, as Mitt's numbers cratered—Kennedy would be the lone vulnerable Senate Democrat to hold his seat that year—Mitt quietly asked them to stay home. The election, he knew, was lost.

Only a few weeks later did he admit to Scott, his brother, how much the experience had bothered him. "He said he never expected to win, but then, at the end, when he lost, he said he absolutely hated it," Scott says. "He told me, 'I'm not going to go into another campaign unless I think I can win.' He said, 'I'm not going to do it again.'"

GEORGE ROMNEY would not live to see his son in political action again: He died a year later, while exercising in the same Bloomfield home where Mitt had grown up. And it would be seven more years before Mitt gave politics another try. But this time the prospects were much brighter: He wouldn't be trying to take a Senate seat away from a Kennedy. Instead, he would be running for governor, a post Republicans had held continuously since the early '90s.

Mitt positioned himself much as he had during his Senate run eight years before. He campaigned primarily on economics and management skills; he would balance the state's out-of-control budget and attract new businesses to revive the economy. Once again, he assured social liberals that he had no intention of upending abortion rights. And, while he made clear his rejection of same-sex marriage, he went out of his way to cultivate the support of gay Republicans once again, meeting one-on-one with members of the Log Cabin Republicans. At Boston's Gay Pride parade, Romney flyers touted "equal rights ... regardless of sexual preference" (although both Romney's former campaign manager and his deputy told me they did not authorize the flyers).

This time, Romney won easily. And, at least in the early going, he showed signs of governing the way he had campaigned—reprising, again, his father's early history in Michigan. He got intimately involved with the details of an initiative to change the state's school funding scheme, so that

poorer districts would get more money. Romney also brought in advisers based on management instinct rather than partisan affiliation. "He never asked me if I was a Democrat or a Republican, and never asked most of the Cabinet members who came with me," says Barbara Berke, a BCG partner who served as his chief of economic development from 2002 through 2005. Romney also appointed several well-known gay activists to high-ranking positions in his administration, tapping one for a Cabinet post.

The episode in which Romney's stewardship instincts—and his father's influence—were perhaps most evident was his passage of major health care reform. That saga began in 2005, when it became apparent that, because of a quirk in the structure of federal Medicaid funding, Massachusetts actually stood to lose some money from Washington if it didn't find a way to expand health insurance coverage. When Democrats proposed that the state seize the opportunity to pass universal health coverage, Romney surprised virtually everybody by announcing that he agreed.

Romney's subsequent work on the health care bill showcased his best qualities—reminiscent, in many ways, of his days at Bain. For advice, he tapped some of the state's top minds on health—even those, like MIT's Jonathan Gruber, who had traditionally advised Democrats. For political support, he reached out to traditional champions of expanded coverage, such as former House member John McDonough, turning these would-be adversaries into allies. And, above all, he went into negotiations with an open mind. The result was a bill that had enough support to get all the way through the legislative process. Romney ended up signing the bill in a grand public ceremony on the steps of Faneuil Hall. Standing at his side was his old nemesis, Ted Kennedy—who, it turns out, had worked closely with Romney on sealing the deal. "I'm a partisan Democrat, and, in a lot of ways, I think he was a terrible governor," says one high-ranking legislative staffer who worked on the measure. "But I do give him credit for participating in the health care debate and helping to advance that agenda."

BUT ROMNEY had even loftier ambitions on his mind than bringing universal health care to the people of Massachusetts. He wanted to do what his father couldn't—become president. And, around that time, Romney began to evolve into a more conservative politician. Following a controver-

sial state court decision legalizing gay marriage in early 2004, Romney initially backed a civil unions proposal as a reasonable compromise, only to pull his support at the last minute and instead back a more harshly worded amendment that might have made partnership benefits illegal as well.

That fall, Romney—citing a meeting in his office with a pair of Harvard scientists working on stem-cell research—told his advisers that he wanted to start labeling himself “pro-life.” He claimed to have been taken aback by the scientists’ cavalier attitude toward the disposing of embryos. That surprised some of his advisers, since Romney had been outspoken in his support of stem-cell research (his wife has multiple sclerosis, and stem-cell research may lead to a cure) and had frequently championed it in speeches to biotech companies and industry groups he was hoping to lure to Massachusetts. Abortion rights activists were even more flummoxed. Here was a candidate who had compiled a long, very public record of defending abortion rights. Yet now, because of a single meeting over stem-cell research, he had suddenly done an about-face. And here was the candidate who, years before, like his father, had promised to work within the Republican Party to pull it away from conservative extremism sounding more and more like an extremist himself.

Romney maintains the shift represents a true evolution of thinking—a genuine change of heart. Several friends and members of his family confirmed hearing him talk about the stem-cell meeting shortly after it took place. But critics note that, when Romney decided to announce his new position on stem cells, he didn’t do it at a local event or in an interview with a local reporter. He decided to tell a reporter from *The New York Times*—which most people interpreted as a sign that Romney was no longer pitching himself to the voters of Massachusetts.

As a presidential candidate, Romney has tried to position himself as the only true conservative among the front-runners, running ads in which he portrays himself as a lone right-wing warrior fighting the good fight against out-of-control liberals in Massachusetts. The conservative posturing has gone well beyond cultural issues, too. In one debate, when asked about the controversial enemy combatant camp at Guantánamo Bay, he quipped that, instead of closing it down—as even some Republicans have urged—he would double its size. When queried about his past support for the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban,

he replied that he was a veteran hunter and lifetime member of the National Rifle Association. (Later, he would admit that he had signed up for that lifetime membership only a year before—and that he had limited hunting experience.)

But, if any one moment epitomized the new Mitt Romney, it was his speech before the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) in February. There, gathered in one place, were the intellectual and ideological heirs to the conservative movement that first captured control of the Republican Party in the 1960s. But Mitt Romney had not come to carry on his father’s fight against the right wing. He had come, instead, to do what every other aspiring Republican presidential nominee was doing: beg for the group’s approval. After being introduced by Grover Norquist, the conservative activist perhaps most responsible for the radical makeover of government economic policy in the last decade, Romney began his speech by suggesting it was a “good thing” the crowd would soon hear from Ann Coulter, who was next on the speaking agenda. From there, he fed the crowd red meat—attacking Ted Kennedy, Nancy Pelosi, and the press; promising to fight the liberal social agenda, to close U.S. borders, and to never, ever raise taxes. “This is not the time for us to shrink from conservative principles,” Romney thundered. “It is time for us to stand in strength.” The next day, CPAC delegates voted on their presidential preferences. Romney, with 22 percent, came in first.

When I interviewed Romney, I asked him about the speech—which had taken place just a month earlier—and what he imagined his father might have said if it were him, and not Mitt, addressing the crowd. “Hopefully, he’d have given a speech just like mine,” Mitt said. “I’m conservative. My dad was conservative.” And, while Romney noted that he didn’t line up with CPAC on every issue, he said he simply hadn’t chosen to emphasize those differences. “In a speech to CPAC, I’ll emphasize those areas we have in common,” he said. “I won’t get up and say, ‘Let me tell you the places where you and I might disagree.’” But that, of course, is precisely what his father had made a practice of doing.

STILL, THERE WAS a moment in our interview when I caught a glimpse of the Romney more familiar to the voters who elected him in 2002. It happened when I asked him to talk about the presidents he most admired—the ones he would most like to emulate if he were ever elected. Reagan, the father of mod-

ern conservatism and the usual centerpiece of his speeches, never came up. Instead, after working through some of the usual clichés—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln—he settled on a Democrat, Harry Truman, and a moderate Republican, Dwight Eisenhower, the latter for steering the country through the 1950s without starting a nuclear war.

Eisenhower was also George Romney’s patron. And it wasn’t the only time during this campaign that Mitt Romney has linked himself to his father’s legacy. I’d seen him do so at least once before—in the speech where he formally announced his candidacy. It was in Dearborn, Michigan, at the Henry Ford Museum. For the occasion, museum officials brought out a display with one of the old AMC Ramblers, which stood behind Romney as he spoke. The speech Romney gave that day was a lot more like one his father might have given, focusing on how to improve economic innovation (thus the museum setting) and better manage the government.

Some of the people who have known him the longest think that this version of Romney is closer to the one who would actually govern. “I know Mitt is taking positions that are uncharacteristically conservative, probably more conservative than the man behind closed doors, but it is what you have to do to get the nomination of the Republican Party,” says Cranbrook alum Sidney Barthwell Jr. Although a Democrat, Barthwell says he will probably vote for Romney anyway. “He is of the highest character, a straight-ahead guy. ... He would make a great president, even though I disagree with all the positions he takes.”

Maybe he’s right. Maybe the Romney who campaigned in 1994 and 2002—the one known for his fast intellect and superior management skills—really would make a fine president. And maybe that former incarnation of Romney is still lurking in there, somewhere, behind all the rigidly conservative rhetoric. But does that even matter? The people Romney is courting now have a claim on him. If he becomes president, they will hold him to his promises, pushing him to enact their agenda—and punishing him should he stray. George Romney’s presidential hopes ended prematurely, on the day he gave that ill-advised interview about Vietnam. Mitt’s candidacy will surely endure longer—maybe all the way until January 2009. But, in going further than his father ever could, Mitt Romney is also sacrificing something his father didn’t: the governing philosophy that made him a promising leader in the first place. ♦

Last Act

Is this the end of Palestine?

MARTIN PERETZ

THINK BACK two years. Ariel Sharon was not only alive but healthy and staking his place in history on an idea he had never truly believed: that the Arabs of Palestine might be ready for peace with the Jewish state. This idea may have run against both his deepest convictions and his basic instincts. But somehow he carried many of his old comrades with him: comrades from Israel's old wars and comrades from the political right—where, after a brief parliamentary stint on the left, he had positioned himself.

Carrying comrades to a place they had not been before also entailed making enemies, and Sharon's enemies were bitter and vindictive. Nonetheless, he carried out the withdrawal of all 8,000 or so Israelis from Gaza unconditionally and without making explicit demands on the Palestinians—or inexplicit ones, for that matter. He also dismantled four settlements in the West Bank, from what he and his friends called Samaria. No one thought that these would be the last to be vacated, no one. And Israel's entire security establishment (army, intelligence, the diplomatic corps) laid out various maps for discussion that were uncannily reminiscent of the (overly generous) proposals put forward by Ehud Barak in the waning days, the pathetic waning days, of the Clinton administration.

Condoleezza Rice even persuaded a few American Jewish zillionaires to ante up roughly \$15 million to buy, as a parting gift from the Jews at once symbolic and practical, for the Gaza Arabs the hothouses that had helped make local agriculture, for the first time in history, so abundant and also valuable. Ask about the hothouses of Gaza now, and people will laugh. Ask about the rest of Gaza, and people will cry.

They cried even before Gaza was put through the trauma of civil war. For what was unraveling was the whole idea of the Palestine nation itself. Of course, some said, "I told you so." (I count myself among those entitled to say that.) I was never taken in by the dream of Palestine, although I realized that Israeli domination over so many Arabs did somewhat dim the incandescence of the Zionist reality, a free Jewish people, free in politics and in spirit, in arts and in science and above all in literature, in law, and in the press, free from the religious coercion of the rabbis, a nation speaking its own language at home at last.

NO PEOPLE MOVES without an elite committed to the whole. That the Palestinian elites were and are corrupt is a historic reality, a shabby reality. It was the Palestinian aristocracy that sold off its lands for Jewish settlement from the very beginning of the Zionist experiment. And the last act broadcast on television: the dismantling of the gaudy riches of Palestine's "revolutionaries" in Gaza.

Contrast this with the secular, although economically impoverished, aristocracy of the kibbutz, created by the early Zionists, which, as Dorothea Krook has shown, shaped the ethos of both the movement and the state. There was an exhilarating and learned asceticism to the Jewish pioneers, an asceticism that has almost altogether vanished but remains as contingent reproach. It is needed now.

Most of the Arabs of Palestine resented the Jews. But resentment is not a foundation for a nation. In some uncanny way, Yasir Arafat grasped the guilefulness of Palestinian peoplehood and so was always inventing new myths (e.g., Jesus was the first Palestinian). There has been a big to-do in academic circles over the last quarter-century about "imagined communities" as nations. This was meant to help legitimize groups whose coherence was incoherent. But, alas, even Benedict Anderson, in fitting his lax definitions with history, does not refer at all to the Palestinians. The British Communist historian Eric Hobsbawm does allude to the Palestinians in his book on nationalism, but only to dismiss them as a nationalist movement.

One of the harsh truths that we have learned is that terrorism may be the prime expression of a fledgling nationalism, perhaps even its only collective expression. But it does bring a certain dread to its adversaries, and Palestinian terrorism has over the decades brought that dread to Israel. A suicide bomb also makes a big and incredulous splash, and with that comes to its instigators the sense that they can no longer be ignored. Of course, their hapless but willing instrument is dead. Poor man, increasingly we can also say poor woman, poor pregnant woman.

PALESTINE" IS NOT the only place where the very idea of the nation is so weak that its violent eruptions seem to be dismal admissions of failure. But, however impoverished the reality, it has caught the fancy of many outside Palestine. The fact is that, had these outsiders—some cynical, some hopelessly muddle-headed—not embraced the cause, the cause already would have perished from its own exhaustion.

So what is Palestine? It is an improvisation from a series of rude facts. Palestine was never anything of especial importance to the Arabs or to the larger orbit of Muslims. Palestine was never even an integral territory of the Ottomans but split up in *sanjaks* that crossed later post-World War I borders, a geographical and political jumble. When General Allenby captured Jerusalem, it was a great happening for believing Christian Europe, not a tragedy for Islam. When the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine was passed, envisioning a "Jewish" state and an "Arab" (not, mind you, Palestinian) state, even the idea of a separate Arab realm was met at best with a yawn. Though almost no Arab wanted Jewish sovereignty in any of Palestine, virtually no Arab seemed to crave Arab sovereignty, either. Foreign Arab armies did the fighting against the Haganah, and foreign states sat for the Palestinians at the cease-fire negotiations, as they had sat for decades at the international conferences on Palestine convened by the powers. Palestine was being fought over to be divvied up by Cairo, Amman, and Damascus. The Syrian army was overwhelmed by the Israelis. No rewards there. It was different for King Farouk and Abdullah I, who got land in reward for their soldiers' combat.

Indeed, from 1949 through 1967, what was the West Bank of Arab Palestine was annexed—yes, annexed—by Jordan, and what was the Gaza Strip was a captive territory of Egypt, unannexed so that Gazans had no rights as Egyptians (whereas the West Bankers had rights as Jordanians). The Palestine Liberation Organization,

founded in 1964, was not founded to liberate these territories. It was founded to liberate that part of Palestine held by Israel.

We are long past this history, and Israel had become accustomed to the idea—if not exactly the precise reality—of an independent Palestine for the Palestinians, the name of their desire. Ehud Olmert gladly would have signed on the dotted line if the Palestinian Authority could bring itself to realize it would get what it could get (and perhaps even a little more) if the Palestinians would finally stop their war against the Jews. And their rage.

But the Palestinians' war against the Jews is actually also a war against one another. While Mahmoud Abbas probably would have settled for being president of a cartographically realistic Palestine, there were integral parts of Fatah, and particularly its fighting gangs, that still held out for the grand irredentist map—if not "from the river to the sea," something more than was ordained in 1967. Could Abbas, in the end, rein them in? Not when Hamas had set the terms of the intra-Palestinian conflict as all or nothing. Those are characteristic Hamas conditions, with other Arabs as with the Jews. It is true that Fatah men of combat were battling for their lives. But they were not battling for peace with Israel.

The disintegration of Gaza began as soon as the Israelis departed. This was not an issue of what Israel did or did not do. The ur-religious and the ur-nationalist were in psychological control of the strip from the beginning. Hamas did not shoot (many) rockets across the border into enemy territory. But its surrogates did. Hamas did nothing about this, and Fatah really couldn't. They couldn't, although Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, the American coordinator in the area, assured they could, especially after supplying arms to Fatah and persuading Olmert to supply more weapons, which, as luck would have it, are now in Hamas's possession. The ordinary Gazans clearly were not pleased by the chaos and the haphazard murders on the streets. They were and are objects not subjects, victims not victimizers. But Hamas is also bitter, embittered by its costly victory. For them, there remains the project of Reconstruction, in the American Civil War sense, of the souls of their neighbors.

THE FINAL FALL of Gaza to Hamas puts the whole question of Palestine and the Palestinians into a new perspective. There are now three cohorts of Palestinians between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. (Four, if you count the Palestinian majority under Hashemite rule.)

Let's deal first with the easiest of these to grasp: the Arabs of Israel, citizens of Israel

with freedoms—legal and social—that are unimaginable in any Arab country. Their loyalties are always tested by kin and undetermined by the residual discriminations of the Jewish state. But their loyalties are also the subject of an inevitable internal struggle. They are, after all, the privileged Palestinians, the Palestinians who live in a decent society. But one thing of which they will not hear—and that is a perfectly logical proposal—is that some of them, together with their land and homes, become part of whatever Palestine will be. The hostility to this idea will, by way of compensation, radicalize these Israeli Arabs and thus make them more and more suspect by their Jewish fellow citizens.

Then, there is the West Bank. The optimism about peace prospects there is, at least, very much premature. And, frankly, from what I know about locales like Jenin and Hebron, I wonder why commentators think that the Judea and Samaria territories are so different from Gaza. In fact, these Palestinian cities historically have been centers of Arab extremism, although—and this is a curious characteristic of Arab extremism—this rarely ties one locale to another. So what you have is the bane of fanaticism without the bonds of community. Indeed, the defining loyalty among many Palestinians is loyalty to family, clan, and tribe, not progressive social formations, as they say. But Rashid Khalidi does not focus on these persistences in his book *Palestinian Identity*, which he optimistically subtitled *The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. In fact, the persistence of these antique ties is another reason why the Palestinians are far from being a coherent people. But, then, Pakistan is also not a nation, and neither is Iraq. I recall that Palestinian embroidery differs in every town and city. That is quaint, and it makes for pretty dresses in many styles. But it is not a model for a nation-state.

The initiative remains with the Gaza Palestinians, which is to say, Hamas. It will not be tempted, as many of the journalistic prophets informed us when the group won the parliamentary elections, to become responsible. Rage is actually its way in the world, and it is a shrewd, if not wise, tactic. Your adversary becomes uncertain and jittery, afraid to provoke but loath to ignore. Rockets will continue to land in the towns and kibbutzim of the Negev and further into Israel. More advanced weapons will be smuggled into Gaza—alas, from Egypt, which did not, over the past years, demonstrate either the will or the capacity to stop the running of war materials from the Sinai to the Strip.

Israel must now make choices that will determine Egypt's responsibilities. Given

the fact that Hamas has declared war on Israel, Jerusalem could decide to simply seal its border with Gaza. Enemies at war do not generally supply one other with food and medical provisions, let alone gas and electricity. What should persuade Israel to make such arrangements? To win goodwill? Nonsense.

Of course, Egypt could assume greater responsibility, including the shepherding of endangered Fatah Palestinians to safety. But a corollary to that would be the obligation to truly bar weapons from being sent underground to Hamas. So what if Israel responds to Hamas rocket and missile assaults harshly and with the precision that its air power permits? Is not Mubarak afraid of Hamas's cousins in the streets of Cairo, the Muslim Brotherhood, already chafing under the regime's heavy hand? Israel might also recapture the Philadelphia Corridor and police the Gaza border with Egypt.

THERE IS at least one assumption that we can make: Israel will not permit attacks without appropriate response. The abandonment of Sderot by a third of its population is a stain on Zionism. It will not occur again. And, with Israel under such intense pressure from Gaza, it is hardly possible to imagine that even Fatah will be able to resist the temptation of armed mischief. And why do I say even Fatah? I shouldn't.

Then, of course, Hezbollah may be tempted, and Syria, too. The resulting combination—assaults from the north, the east, and the west—would be a peril for Israel. But the most serious near-term danger actually comes from the West Bank. For rockets and more precise weapons aimed at the thickly populated heart and narrow waist of Israel from almost any place in what is now Fatah land would revive both the anxieties and military reflexes of the state and its population. Surely that would not be good for the Arabs.

That is why U.S. policy must not assume that there are facile ways to render the West Bank peaceful. Almost everyone has admitted, some with bitterness, that what keeps that area of Palestine more orderly than Gaza is the proximate presence of Israeli troops near Arab population centers.

Would that there were a mature national will among the Palestinians. It might even be able to temper the rage of the Arabs against one another. Not until their sense of peoplehood conquers their rage against one another will they be in the psychological position to think of peace with Israel. I doubt this will happen any time soon. This is the end of Palestine, the bitter end. ♦



Titanic

*Reshuffling the deck chairs
on the NATIONAL REVIEW cruise.*

JOHANN HARI



MICHAEL WITTE

I AM STANDING waist-deep in the Pacific Ocean, indulging in the polite chit-chat beloved by vacationing Americans. A sweet elderly lady from Los Angeles is sitting on the rocks nearby, telling me dreamily about her son. “Is he your only child?” I ask. “Yes,” she answers. “Do you have a child back in England?” she asks me. No, I say. Her face darkens. “You’d better start,” she says. “The Muslims are breeding. Soon, they’ll have the whole of Europe.”

I am getting used to such moments, when holiday geniality bleeds into—well, I’m not sure exactly what. I am traveling on a bright-white cruise ship with two restaurants, five bars, and 500 readers of *National Review*. Here, the Iraq war has been “an amazing success.” Global warming is not happening. Europe is becoming a new Caliphate. And I have nowhere to run.

From time to time, *National Review*—the bible of American conservatism—organizes a cruise for its readers. Last November, I paid \$1,200 to join them. The rules I imposed on myself were simple: If any of the conservative cruisers asked who I was, I answered honestly, telling them I was a journalist. But, mostly, I just tried to blend in—and find out what conservatives say when they think the rest of us aren’t listening.

I ARRIVE AT THE dockside in San Diego on a Saturday afternoon and stare up at the *Oost-erdam*, our home for the next seven days. We guests have been told to gather for a cocktail reception on a deck near the top of the ship. There are no big hugs or warm kisses at this gathering. This is a place of starchy introductions. Men approach one another with puffed-out chests and sturdy handshakes. Women are greeted with a single kiss on the cheek. Anything more, of course, would be French.

I adjust and stiffly greet the first man I see. He is a judge, he tells me, with the craggy self-important charm that slowly consumes any judge. He is from Canada, he declares (a little more apologetically), and is the founding president of “Canadians Against Suicide Bombing.” Would there be many members of “Canadians for Suicide Bombing?” I ask. Dismayed, he suggests that yes, yes there would.

A bell rings somewhere, and we are all beckoned to dinner. We have been assigned random seats, which will change each night. We will, the publicity pack promises, each dine with at least one

National Review speaker during our trip.

To my left, I find a middle-aged Floridian with a neat beard. To my right are two elderly New Yorkers who look and sound like late-era Dorothy Parker, minus the alcohol poisoning. They live on Park Avenue, they explain in precise Northern tones. "You must live near the U.N. building," the Floridian says to one of the ladies after the entrée is served. Yes, she responds, shaking her head wearily. "They should suicide-bomb that place," he says. They all chuckle gently.

The conversation ebbs back to friendly chit-chat. So, you're a European, one of the Park Avenue ladies says, before offering witty commentaries on the cities she's visited. Her companion adds, "I went to Paris, and it was so lovely." Her face darkens: "But then you think—it's surrounded by Muslims." The first lady nods: "They're out there, and they're coming." Emboldened, the bearded Floridian wags a finger and says, "Down the line, we're not going to bail out the French again." He mimes picking up a phone and shouts into it, "I can't hear you, Jacques! What's that? The Muslims are doing *what* to you? I can't hear you!"

Now that this barrier has been broken—everyone agrees the Muslims are devouring the French, and everyone agrees it's funny—the usual suspects are quickly rounded up. Jimmy Carter is "almost a traitor." John McCain is "crazy" because of "all that torture." One of the Park Avenue ladies declares that she gets on her knees every day to "thank God for Fox News." As the wine reaches the Floridian, he sits back and announces, "This cruise is the best money I ever spent."

THE NEXT MORNING, I warily wander into the Vista Lounge—a Vegas-style showroom—for the first of the trip's seminars: a discussion intended to exhume the conservative corpse and discover its cause of death on the black, black night of November 7, 2006.

There is something strange about this discussion, and it takes me a few moments to realize exactly what it is. All the tropes conservatives usually deny in public—that Iraq is another Vietnam, that Bush is fighting a class war on behalf of the rich—are embraced on this shining ship in the middle of the ocean. Yes, they concede, we are fighting another Vietnam; and this time we won't let the weak-kneed liberals lose it. "It's customary to say we lost the Vietnam war, but who's 'we'?" Dinesh D'Souza asks angrily. "The left won by demanding America's humiliation." On this ship, there are no Viet Cong, no three million dead. There

is only liberal treachery. Yes, D'Souza says, in a swift shift to domestic politics, "of course" Republican politics is "about class. Republicans are the party of winners, Democrats are the party of losers."

The panel nods, but it doesn't want to stray from Iraq. Robert Bork, Ronald Reagan's one-time nominee to the Supreme Court, mumbles from beneath low-hanging jowls: "The coverage of this war is unbelievable. Even Fox News is unbelievable. You'd think we're the only ones dying. Enemy casualties aren't covered. We're doing an excellent job killing them."

Then, with a judder, the panel runs momentarily aground. Rich Lowry, the preppy, handsome 38-year-old editor of *National Review*, announces, "The American public isn't concluding we're losing in Iraq for any irrational reason. They're looking at the cold, hard facts." The Vista Lounge is, as one, perplexed. Lowry continues, "I wish it was true that, because we're a superpower, we can't lose. But it's not."

No one argues with him. They just look away, in the same manner that people avoid glancing at a crazy person yelling at a bus stop. Then they return to hyperbole and accusations of treachery against people like their editor. The aging historian Bernard Lewis declares, "The election in the U.S. is being seen by [the bin Ladenists] as a victory on a par with the collapse of the Soviet Union. We should be prepared for whatever comes next." This is why the guests paid up to \$6,000. This is what they came for. They give him a wheezing, stooping ovation and break for coffee.

A FRACTURE-LINE IN the lumbering certainty of American conservatism is opening right before my eyes. Following the break, Norman Podhoretz and William Buckley—two of the grand old men of the Grand Old Party—begin to feud. Podhoretz will not stop speaking—"I have lots of ex-friends on the left; it looks like I'm going to have some ex-friends on the right, too," he rants—and Buckley says to the chair, "Just take the mike, there's no other way." He says it with a smile, but with heavy eyes.

Podhoretz and Buckley now inhabit opposite poles of post-September 11 American conservatism, and they stare at wholly different Iraqs. Podhoretz is the Brooklyn-born, street-fighting kid who traveled through a long phase of left-liberalism to a pugilistic belief in America's power to redeem the world, one bomb at a time. Today, he is a bristling gray ball of aggression, here to declare that the Iraq war has been "an amaz-

ing success." He waves his fist and declaims, "There were WMD, and they were shipped to Syria. ... This picture of a country in total chaos with no security is false. It has been a triumph. It couldn't have gone better." He wants more wars, and fast. He is "certain" Bush will bomb Iran, and "thank God" for that.

Buckley is an urbane old reactionary, drunk on doubts. He founded *National Review* in 1955—when conservatism was viewed in polite society as a mental affliction—and he has always been skeptical of appeals to "the people," preferring the eternal top-down certainties of Catholicism. He united with Podhoretz in mutual hatred of Godless Communism, but, slouching into his eighties, he possesses a worldview that is ill-suited for the fight to bring democracy to the Muslim world. He was a ghostly presence on the cruise at first, appearing only briefly to shake a few hands. But now he has emerged, and he is fighting.

"Aren't you embarrassed by the absence of these weapons?" Buckley snaps at Podhoretz. He has just explained that he supported the war reluctantly, because Dick Cheney convinced him Saddam Hussein had WMD primed to be fired. "No," Podhoretz replies. "As I say, they were shipped to Syria. During Gulf war one, the entire Iraqi air force was hidden in the deserts in Iran." He says he is "heartbroken" by this "rise of defeatism on the right." He adds, apropos of nothing, "There was nobody better than Don Rumsfeld. This defeatist talk only contributes to the impression we are losing, when I think we're winning."

The audience cheers Podhoretz. The nuanced doubts of Bill Buckley leave them confused. Doesn't he sound like the liberal media? Later, over dinner, a tablemate from Denver calls Buckley "a coward." His wife nods and says, "Buckley's an old man," tapping her head with her finger to suggest dementia.

I DECIDE TO track down Buckley and Podhoretz separately and ask them for interviews. Bill is sitting forlornly in his cabin, scribbling in a notebook. In 2005, at an event celebrating *National Review's* fiftieth birthday, President Bush described today's American conservatives as "Bill's children." I ask him if he feels like a parent whose kids grew up to be serial killers. He smiles slightly, and his blue eyes appear to twinkle. Then he sighs, "The answer is no. Because what animated the conservative core for forty years was the Soviet menace, plus the rise of dogmatic socialism. That's pretty well gone."

This does not feel like an optimistic defense of his brood, but it's a theme he returns to repeatedly: The great battles of his life are already won. Still, he ruminates over what his old friend Ronald Reagan would have made of Iraq. "I think the prudent Reagan would have figured here, and the prudent Reagan would have shunned a commitment of the kind that we are now engaged in. . . . I think he would have attempted to find some sort of assurance that any exposure by the United States would be exposure to a challenge the dimensions of which we could predict." Lest liberals be too eager to adopt the Gipper as one of their own, Buckley agrees approvingly that Reagan's approach would have been to "find a local strongman" to rule Iraq.

A few floors away, Podhoretz tells me he is losing his voice, "which will make some people very happy." Then he croaks out the standard-issue Wolfowitz line about how, after September 11, the United States had to introduce democracy to the Middle East in order to change the political culture that produced the mass murderers. For somebody who declares democracy to be his goal, he is remarkably blasé about the fact that 80 percent of Iraqis want U.S. troops to leave their country, according to the latest polls. "I don't much care," he says, batting the question away. He goes on to insist that "nobody was tortured in Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo" and that Bush is "a hero." He is, like most people on this cruise, certain the administration will attack Iran.

"I keep telling people we are in World War Four," Podhoretz declares. He fumes at Buckley, George Will, and the other apostate conservatives who refuse to see sense. He again declares victory. And for a moment, here in the Mexican breeze, it is as though, thousands of miles away, Baghdad is not bleeding.

I ENCOUNTER OTHER ghosts of conservatism past wandering the ship as well. From the pool, I see John O'Sullivan, former adviser to Margaret Thatcher and former editor of *National Review*. And, one morning on the deck, I discover Kenneth Starr, looking like he has stepped out of a long-forgotten 1990s newsreel. His face is round and unlined, like that of an immense, contented baby. As I stare at it, all my repressed bewilderment rises, and I ask: Mr. Starr, do you feel ashamed that, while Osama bin Laden was plotting to murder nearly 3,000 American citizens, you brought the government to a standstill over a few consensual blow-jobs?

He smiles through his teeth and says, in his soft, somnambulant voice, "I am entirely at rest with the process. The House of Representatives worked its will, the Senate worked its will, the chief justice of the United States presided. The constitutional process worked admirably." It's an oddly meek defense, and, the more I challenge him, the more legalistic he becomes, each answer a variation on, "It wasn't my fault."

Several days later, the nautical counter-revolution has docked in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, where passengers will clamber overboard into a nation they want to wall off behind a 1,000-mile fence. One expresses horror at my intention to find a local street kid to show me around, exclaiming, "Do you want to die?" D'Souza summarizes the prevailing sentiment by unveiling what he modestly calls "D'Souza's law of immigration": An immigrant's quality is "proportional to the distance traveled to get to the United States." In other words: Asians trump Latinos.

After wandering Puerto Vallarta without bodily harm, I return for dinner with my special *National Review* guest: Kate O'Beirne. She's an impossibly tall blonde with the voice of a 1930s screwball star and the arguments of an 1890s Victorian patriarch. She inveighs against feminism and "women who make the world worse" in quick quips. She is sitting among adoring fans with her husband, Jim, who quickly announces that he is Donald Rumsfeld's personnel director. "People keep asking what I'm doing here, with him being fired and all," he says. "But the cruise has been arranged for a long time."

The familiar routine of the dinners—getting-to-know-you chit-chat, followed by raging right-wing echo chamber—is accelerating. Tonight, there is explicit praise for a fascist dictator before the entrée has arrived. I drop the news that there are moves in Germany to have Rumsfeld extradited to face war crimes charges. A red-faced man who looks like an egg with a moustache glued on grumbles, "If the Germans think they can take responsibility for the world, I don't care about German courts. Bomb them." I begin to cite the Pinochet precedent, and O'Beirne snaps, "Treating Don Rumsfeld like Pinochet is disgusting." Egg Man pounds his fist on the table: "Treating Pinochet like that is disgusting. Pinochet is a hero. He saved Chile." "Exactly," adds O'Beirne's husband. "And he privatized Social Security."

The table nods solemnly before marching onward to Topic A: the billion-strong swarm of Muslims who

are poised to take over the world. The idea that Europe is being "taken over" is the unifying theme of this cruise. Some people go on singles' cruises, some on ballroom-dancing cruises. This is the Muslims Are Coming cruise. Everyone thinks it. Everyone *knows* it. And the man most responsible for this insight is sitting only a few tables down: Mark Steyn. He is wearing sunglasses on top of his head and a bright shirt. Steyn's thesis in his new book, *America Alone*, is simple: The "European races"—i.e., white people—"are too self-absorbed to breed," but the Muslims are multiplying quickly. The inevitable result will be "large-scale evacuation operations circa 2015" as Europe is ceded to Al Qaeda and "Greater France remorselessly evolve[s] into Greater Bosnia." He offers a light smearing of dubious demographic figures—he needs to turn 20 million European Muslims into more than 150 million in nine years, which is a lot of humping—to "prove" his case.

But facts, figures, and doubt are not on the itinerary of this cruise. With one or two exceptions, the passengers discuss "the Muslims" as a homogenous, sharia-seeking block—already with near-total control of Europe. Over the week, I am asked nine times—I counted—when I am fleeing Europe's encroaching Muslim population for the safety of the United States.

At one of the seminars, a panelist says anti-Americanism comes from both directions in a grasping pincer movement—"The Muslims condemn us for being decadent; the Europeans condemn us for not being decadent enough." Midge Decter, Norman Podhoretz's wife, yells, "The Muslims are right, the Europeans are wrong!" And, instantly, Jay Nordlinger, *National Review's* managing editor and the panel's chair, says, "I'm afraid a lot of the Europeans are Muslim, Midge." The audience cheers. Somebody shouts, "You tell 'em, Jay!"

He tells 'em. Decter tells 'em. Steyn tells 'em. On this cruise, everyone tells 'em—and, thanks to my European passport, tells me. It is, unsurprisingly, the last thing I hear at the end of the voyage. I'm back on the docks of San Diego, watching the tireless champions of the overdog filter past and say their formal goodbyes. As I turn my back on the ship for the last time, I feel the judge I met the first day place his arm affectionately on my shoulder. "We have written off Britain to the Muslims," he says. "Come to America." ♦

Johann Hari is a columnist for *THE INDEPENDENT* newspaper in London.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Saudi “Peace Initiative”

Is it meant to lead to peace or to Israel’s destruction?

Early in 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia granted an interview to Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, in which he declared that if Israel were to withdraw from the “occupied territories,” full normalization of relations with the Arab countries would ensue. That interview was published in *The New York Times* on February 17, 2002. It became known as the Saudi “Peace Initiative” and was considered a “breakthrough” on the road to peace in the Middle East.

What are the facts?

An Arab ultimatum. By the time the dust settled and the Saudi “Peace Initiative” was formalized, its demands were substantially expanded. It called for 1) full Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967, including the “Syrian Golan Heights;” 2) achievement of a “just solution” to the Palestinian refugee problem; 3) acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The most unacceptable of those three conditions is the second. As best can be determined, there were about 650,000 refugees during the 1948 War of Independence. It can be assumed that virtually all of them are by now deceased. But the claim for “repatriation” has been extended to their descendants, who are by now said to have increased to 5 million. These “refugees” have been kept in “refugee camps” for sixty years, for the purpose of keeping the sore festering and to overwhelm Israel when the time came. The twentieth century, with its wars and dislocations, has produced millions upon millions of refugees. The Palestinian “refugees” are the only ones who are being taken care of by UNWRA, an agency of the United Nations created especially for them. No other refugees have similar consideration. The maintenance cost of the “Palestinian refugees” is billions of dollars a year. Who pays for most of this? You guessed it: the United States, of course.

The clear reason that the “repatriation” of these “refugees” (or rather their descendants) into Israel is unacceptable is that, besides their absorption and integration being an economic impossibility, their influx would immediately destroy Israel as a Jewish state and as the last refuge for all persecuted Jews in the world. Some believe that the concept of Israel as a Jewish state is an anachronism and should be done away with. But the reality is that Israel was created as just that, the state of the Jews, by mandate of the League of Nations, by the Balfour

“The Arabs...must teach their children...that their future and their welfare are inextricably bound up with the future, welfare and prosperity of Israel.”

Declaration and by the decision of the United Nations.

Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states that have adopted the Saudi “Peace Initiative” as their own, will not accept any discussion or any modification of their proposal. It is “take it or leave it.” It is an ultimatum. They threatened that, if Israel did not accept the plan in its entirety – it will have renounced peace and will face the “lords of war.”

What about the other two conditions of the “peace initiative”? Full withdrawal from the “occupied territories” is

impossible, given the virulent hatred of the Arabs against the Jews, their bizarre unwillingness to even acknowledge Israel’s existence and their declared intention of destroying it by any means. Israel committed the foolishness of returning the vast

Sinai – an invaluable strategic buffer zone and source of all its potential petroleum needs – to Egypt. It committed the further folly of withdrawing from the south Lebanon buffer zone and the even greater folly of turning Gaza over to the Arabs. It is true that Israel and Egypt have been at peace – the coldest peace conceivable – but mortars and rockets are almost daily launched against Israeli cities from both Gaza and from southern Lebanon. One can imagine what incredible destruction would be wreaked on Israel if it were to commit the ultimate folly of turning the so-called “occupied territories” over to its deadly enemies, sworn to its destruction. The entire country – its population centers, its industrial infrastructure, its utility installations, and its international airport – would be subject to daily barrages from the Judean Heights. The most advanced weaponry, including fighter planes and tanks, and quite likely even Syrian and Iranian troops, would be stationed in the “West Bank.” Without the Judean Heights and without the strategic Jordan Valley in its control, Israel would be utterly indefensible and an easy victim of those who ceaselessly dream of its destruction

If the Saudi “Peace Initiative” is not the solution to the apparently interminable Arab-Israel conflict, what then is? The first step is for the Arabs (and for the Iranians) to accept the reality of Israel’s existence and permanence, not to teach their children that the Jews are the sons of monkeys and pigs, and not to educate them to become suicide bombers and martyrs. They must teach them that Israel is here to stay and that their future and their welfare are inextricably bound up with the future, welfare and prosperity of Israel. That may be a long time in coming, but no real peace is possible without it.

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Books & the Arts

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS LAWRENCE AND OTHERS

WHAT IS THERE about *Lady Chatterley's Lover* that keeps attracting film-makers? The obvious answers won't do: many other novels are suffused with sex and have spicy reputations. For obvious cinematic reasons, it can't be the quality of Lawrence's prose. Yet there have been sixteen films of Lawrence's book, for large and small screens, and some of them come from countries other

than Britain—France, Italy, Japan, the Czech Republic.

And now there is another from France, called simply *Lady Chatterley*. The writer-director, Pascale Ferran, has (with two collaborators) adapted her screenplay from the second of Lawrence's three versions of his book. (Understandably, Ferran has not used that second version's title, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*—not because of its seeming blandness, but because John Thomas was, and still is, a British nickname for the penis.)

Ferran knew exactly why she wanted to do her film, as she makes sensually clear. Evidently she found more resources for her view in version two. There are elements in her picture that are not in version three, which is the novel as we know it. I note only that here the gamekeeper is called Parkin, not Mellors; and, unlike Mellors, Parkin was never a British officer in India. (In both versions, however, he comes from a coal-mining family.) Ferran wanted to deal with passion. In her film sex itself is not the point: instead, it is the best way in which passion is expressed. There are no mere boudoir gymnastics here—sex is the manifestation of a greater force. Jean-François Revel said that passion consists of seeing in the finite an infinity that doesn't exist. In this

film the lovers are seeking the impossible through the possible. The knowledge of that impossibility makes the scenes all the more powerful. This is the core of Lawrence's novel, and Ferran has understood it.

Lady Constance Chatterley, as we all know, is married to Sir Clifford, who was badly wounded in World War I and is now wheelchair-bound and impotent. They live on his grand estate. He still manages the coal mine that he owns. He still loves his wife, and she is devoted to him, but the marriage is obviously incomplete. Then Clifford engages a new gamekeeper, Parkin.

Ferran has treated Connie's first glimpse of Parkin movingly. The lady is walking in the woods near Parkin's hut, and suddenly, coming around a corner, she sees him from behind, naked to the waist, washing himself. He doesn't know that she is there. Connie's response is hushed but intense. She quickly retreats around a corner of the hut, bewildered by the flood of feeling yet paradoxically sure of what has happened in her. The moment is exquisite.

Naturally, Connie finds reasons subsequently to visit Parkin. He knows

why; she knows he knows; yet there is no flirting or flurry. The fire simmers in her, reticent and proper though she is, and her very presence tells this knowledgeable man what is possible. In time it happens.

Despite the plot differences from the third version, basically the sexual encounters between the lovers are the reasons for the film, as they are for the novel. Ferran has cast the two roles wonderfully. Marina Hands has the kind of beauty that makes a viewer eager to know her, to have

that person in one's life. Parkin was a bit easier to cast; still, Jean-Louis Coulloc'h is more than a run-of-the-mill strong, silent man. He seems to live in a garment of experience, which he uses to protect himself as well as to advance. Ferran has worked with these actors to make their encounters both sweeping and faintly frightening. Yet the famous scene in which each decorates the other's nude body with flowers is done with a sense of humor as well as bliss.

One element in Lawrence's story is, for me, still troublesome—the fact that he made Clifford a non-sexual husband. It seems an egregious excuse for Connie's love affair, a justification. The author who wrote so fearlessly on so many subjects certainly knew that a married person, sexually active in that marriage, might still have an affair, might still feel passion for another person. Clifford's impotence has always seemed to me Lawrence's uncharacteristic bow to middle-class morality.

Hippolyte Girardot gives all the flavor possible to Clifford. François-Renaud Labarthe's designs of interiors are—pleasantly—what we expect, and Julien Hirsch's camera understands their textures. Hirsch also deals well with the grounds and woods of the estate, the vitality of nature that surrounds these two people wrapped in passion.



AFTER SAINT JOAN has been burned at the stake in Bernard Shaw's play about her, the executioner goes to report to the Earl of Warwick. The earl has not expected him and says, "Well, fellow: who are you?" The dignified response: "I am not addressed as fellow, my lord. I am the Master Executioner of Rouen: it is a highly skilled mystery." A comparable professional pride runs through *Pierrepoint—The Last Hangman*, a British film that is based on facts.

Albert Pierrepoint was appointed to his post in 1934, following in the footsteps of his father and uncle; he resigned in 1956. (The title of the film is catchy but inaccurate: hangings continued in Britain until 1964.) This account of his life, tautly directed by Adrian Shergold and photographed in masterly film-noir style by Danny Cohen, is essentially the account of a conflict—between the only source of pride available to Pierrepoint and the harsh details of what he is doing. The wonder is that he was able to execute 608 people and (according to the film) gave up only after being forced to deal with a friend.

The whole strange project is sustained largely through the performance of Pierrepoint by Timothy Spall (of *Topsy-Turvy* and *Secrets and Lies*). Part of Spall's talent is in convincing us very quickly, after our first glimpse of his fleshy, banal face, that there is an interesting man behind it. Juliet Stevenson, splendid as always, plays Pierrepoint's barmaid wife with no trace of character-slumming. Known, among other reasons, for her performances in Shakespeare, Stevenson makes this barmaid a complete woman, not an instance of an actor's versatility.

Shergold renders the atmosphere of the executions chillingly enough yet without exploiting the gruesome. A chief effect of these scenes is to remind us that Pierrepoint's profession actually exists, though the lethal means differ. Even in those countries where capital punishment has been abolished, there is always agitation for its return. And there are always men who will do the job. More specifically, this film digs into the crevices of a man who, for most of his life, can find ways to smooth over the days between executions. (He does, indeed, have some ordinary work between his special assignments.)

In his earlier days Shergold worked with Mike Leigh and has learned much from him. The wonder is that Leigh, a director always interested in the social imbalances that society accepts, did not

make this film himself years ago. But Shergold has done the job.

SOME GOOD NEWS brings us bad news. The good news is that the eighteenth Human Rights Watch International Film Festival has arrived, and the bad news, unsurprisingly, is that those rights still need watching. This edition of the festival presents twenty-four films from around the world who are doing this work with anger and with love.

I have seen three of this year's films. *Mon Colonel*, a French picture directed by Laurent Herbiet, is the reverse of Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*. Set mainly in Algeria in the 1950s, this new film views the Algerian struggle against French occupation from the French point of view. It is not merely that French rights must be safeguarded: the presence of France in Algeria is seen as justified and in the long run beneficial. (Costa-Gavras, wizard of political films, collaborated on the screenplay, which we might suspect even if we didn't know it.) The film begins in the home of a retired colonel, who had been a commander in Algeria. An intruder shoots him. The story then explains why it was done and who did it. Herbiet, who must know Pontecorvo's work, has deftly held up a mirror to it.

Enemies of Happiness, co-directed by Eva Mulvad (of Denmark) and Anja Al-

Erhayem, is a documentary about an Afghan woman. Malalai Joya ran for parliament in her country's first election in more than thirty years. Joya met all the opposition that she foresaw, and inevitably she received death threats while she was daring to run. She was elected in 2005. Her career is presented as a small-scale epic of large-scale courage.

An American director, Steven Okazaki, made *White Light/Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. (It will be broadcast on HBO on August 6, the sixty-second anniversary of Hiroshima.) This documentary, says Okazaki, "is not about the rights or wrongs of the decision to drop the bombs.... It is about fourteen people who looked up and saw a white flash." These fourteen, now of course elderly, quietly remind us of matters we usually need to forget: that, in a war, there are human beings on both sides. (The theme, too, of Clint Eastwood's two films about Iwo Jima.) The film also includes interviews with four Americans who were involved in the bombings and who in differing ways have lived with that knowledge.

This entire festival played in New York recently for two weeks, and a selection of twelve to fourteen films will be shown later this year in some forty cities. These programs will be available on DVD in the fall. For more information, consult www.hrw.org/iff. ♦

JED PERL ON ART CLASSICAL WEIGHT

I. THE ANCIENT world still casts a spell. While the educated public surely knows less about Greek and Roman culture than it did a hundred years ago, many men and women continue to approach antiquity with keen expectations, believing that even a rapid glance in that distant mirror can help us better understand ourselves. Robert Fagles's new translation of the *Aeneid* was a publishing event last fall, with commentators suggesting that Virgil's reflections on war and empire could shed some light on America's situation in Iraq; more generally, the question of whether America is Rome increasingly preoccupies contemporary debates about American foreign policy. And far away from the

worlds of power and policy, the opening of the final sections of the new Greek and Roman Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has turned out to be one of the most engrossing museum-going experiences of recent years. Walking through the galleries on a weekday afternoon, you can see how eagerly, how gleefully, college students respond to the unabashed eroticism of the ancient world, to an avidity for bodies that makes even twenty-first-century urban permissiveness look rather puritanical.

There is something at once bluntly familiar and utterly impenetrable about antiquity. Even people who have not read the *Iliad* or looked closely at a Greek vase can feel that they are acquainted with these cultural landmarks. But knowing how to

THE GREEK
AND ROMAN
GALLERIES
THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART

assess such ancient achievements is another matter entirely. Is the *Iliad* a story of heroic individualism? Or is it an allegory of the dangers of pure force, as Simone Weil suggested in a famous essay written on the eve of World War II? When we look at Greek vase paintings, are we mistaken in seeing some mismatch, or at least some tension, between the nearly abstract elegance of the figurative style and the brazenly realistic treatment of sexual encounters? These are the sorts of questions that are raised by all important works of art and literature, which by their very nature can mean many different things. But the stakes are raised almost impossibly high when we are looking at the ancient world, for if the art and literature and philosophy of Greece and Rome are the beginnings of Western civilization, then the act of interpretation becomes nothing less than a referendum on ourselves. There is a tug-of-war that emerges. We want the ancients to reveal themselves to us, which often means that we expect to understand them in our terms. But the closer we look, the more alien they appear. For creative spirits such as Michelangelo and Nietzsche and Joyce, the otherness of antiquity turned out to be part of its significance. The shock of discovering that what you imagined you knew was, in fact, relatively unknown could illuminate your own nature, your own situation.

THE MOST WE can generally hope to grasp of the ancient world are glimpses—fragmented vistas, partial perspectives, moments of insight. These glimpses, the large ones as well as the small ones, are precisely what a museumgoer discovers amid the sun-struck elegance of the Greek and Roman Galleries. The Metropolitan has long possessed what is probably the finest collection of Greek and Roman art outside of Europe. And that collection has never looked better than in this luminous re-installation, fifteen years in the making and opened in stages over the last ten years. The architect Kevin Roche has done a brilliant job of revitalizing the visual beauties of the old McKim, Mead and White galleries on the museum's southern flank, which were constructed early in the twentieth century in a Beaux-Arts style that self-consciously recapitulated the vaulted spaces of ancient Rome. For New Yorkers, the galleries come with built-in memories—of antiquities seen here in decades past, and also of the central court, which for many years was the

museum restaurant, with a pool and splashing fountains and cavorting bronze figures, all part of an interior by the legendary and now once again fashionable decorator Dorothy Draper. But even if you have never been to the Metropolitan before, these finely proportioned galleries suggest historical perspectives, an early twentieth-century Beaux-Arts past that simultaneously evokes a much earlier time and creates a confidently theatrical setting that situates the art of the ancient world in the present, with a renewed emphasis on huge skylights that dramatize the chiaroscuro power of sculptural form.

Those who go to museums in search of innovative installations may think that the Metropolitan has left ancient art looking more or less the way it always looked. And this may be precisely what Carlos A. Picón, the curator in charge of the Greek and Roman Galleries, has set out to do. The gathering of gods and heroes and athletes that fills the grandly scaled central spaces in the Greek and Roman Galleries will give many museumgoers a sense of déjà vu, evoking memories of antiquities glimpsed in any number of collections in Rome or Paris, or for that matter in sepia-toned photographs of the galleries of the Metropolitan as they looked seventy-five years ago. But is familiarity necessarily a bad thing? In a museum as encyclopedic as the Metropolitan, where Asian and African art have been beautifully presented in recent years, one might argue that there is now an ideal of equal-opportunity familiarity. From the Greek and Roman Galleries you can walk straight into the galleries devoted to the art of Africa and the South Seas—to what used to be called primitive art. And for some younger museumgoers, a Papuan spirit board may feel more familiar than a Roman copy of a sculpture of an athlete by Polykleitos. Ancient art was where the Metropolitan started: a collection of some 35,000 antiquities from Cyprus, collected by General Luigi Palma di Cesnola, was the museum's first great acquisition, and Cesnola was the first director of the museum. In giving its Greek and Roman collections this sumptuous re-installation, the museum is returning to its roots—and every return provokes a reconsideration. At the Metropolitan, the Greek and Roman Galleries now emerge as one piece—admittedly a very large piece—of an enormous puzzle, the puzzle of art and culture.

The Greek and Roman Galleries are cosmopolitan in spirit. But they also serve to remind us that cosmopolitanism begins at home. I mean that it

is through our efforts to understand the traditions closest to us that we acquire the critical tools that will enable us to understand other traditions, distant traditions, strange traditions. In the catalogue that the Metropolitan has published to mark this occasion, the works gathered in the Greek and Roman Galleries are referred to as “Art of the Classical World,” and the curators at the Metropolitan would perhaps like us to accept “classical” as a term with a relatively simple meaning, as denoting nothing more than the art produced in a certain geographical area over a certain period of time. At the Metropolitan they may well fear the elitist or exclusionary implications that are sometimes now attached to classical ideas and ideals. Yet “classical” is one of those familiar words loaded with meanings, and when we think of the art of Greece and Rome as classical, we are willy-nilly thinking about values of completeness, of resolution, of perfection—those are the classical ideals—that can help us understand the art of many times and places. Already in ancient Rome certain Greek works were described as classics, and by now we have no trouble speaking of, say, a classical moment in African art.

As pluralists who are comfortable in a museum where we easily move from the art of Africa to the art of Asia, we are quite obviously unwilling to accept classicism as a form of perfection to which only one civilization has access. But there is no reason to assume that classicism, even in its ancient forms, was ever a fixed or static idea. The Romans recognized that the classical style, as it developed in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E., involved some reconciliation of the forces of realism and idealism. That such a classical style was born of a struggle would not have surprised the ancients, who loved to relate stories about the rivalries of great artists; and I think it is in this spirit of classicism as a never-ending struggle, of classicism as dynamic and always in motion, that contemporary museumgoers will want to experience the Greek and Roman Galleries.

IN THE 1920s, André Gide identified the element of struggle in classicism when he observed that “the classical work of art tells of the triumph of order and measure over inner romanticism.” The Greek and Roman Galleries present such a great variety of work that we cannot help but be brought close to the romantic urges that classicism sets out to subdue. We have here, after all, not only

the cool athleticism of a Roman copy of a statue of a young man by Polykleitos, but also the dreamy smile of an early fifth-century youth, the clotted-cream lusciousness of a Dionysian sarcophagus from the third century C.E., and the blunt realism of a monumental head of Constantine from the fourth century C.E. We understand what Gide meant when he said that “the greater the initial revolt of the object brought under subjection, the more beautiful is the work of art.” Indeed, the trouble with some of the chilliest of the Roman copies of Greek statues is that the romantic heat was probably not there to begin with. “True classicism,” Gide continues, “is composed of nothing that restricts or suppresses; it is not so much conservative as creative; it turns away from archaism and refuses to believe that everything has already been said.”

The wonder of this beautiful installation is that it is not modern, or postmodern, or anti-modern. Instead it presents the beginnings of art in the West in a manner that is free-spirited, open-minded, and bracingly unideological. In one respect there could hardly have been a worse time to open these galleries, for in recent years ancient art and archaeology have been under a cloud of scandal, with museums, especially in the United States, accused by European governments of collaborating, at least tacitly, with unscrupulous dealers and overeager collectors to flout or finesse laws designed to protect the national patrimony. The appetite for antiquities has placed many dealers, collectors, and even curators on a collision course with archaeologists and scholars who quite rightly are protesting the ongoing destruction of archaeological sites; and indeed, Shelby White and the late Leon Levy, major donors to the Metropolitan after whom the Roman court has been named, have been widely criticized in some parts of the scholarly world.

More than a year ago, when Philippe de Montebello, the director of the Metropolitan, sat down with Italian officials to resolve claims against works in the museum’s collection, skeptics could argue that he was simply practicing damage control. By hammering out a repatriation plan that includes long-term loans, he freed the Metropolitan from the aura of illegality that has enveloped the Getty in Los Angeles and once again proved himself a master politician.

But de Montebello was doing something more important, too. He was announcing that the Metropolitan is dedicated to something higher than provenance and provincialism; that the question of what belongs to “us” and what belongs to “them” must never overshadow the greater power, the universal power, of the art itself, which is that it belongs to anybody who takes a heartfelt interest.

In “A History of the Department of Greek and Roman Art,” an essay that Picón has contributed to the new handbook of the Metropolitan’s classical collections, we are invited to review the



Statue of a kouros, circa 590–580 B.C.E.

museum’s century-long efforts on behalf of ancient art. Picón lingers over the distinguished scholars who have served at the Metropolitan, among them Gisela M. A. Richter, who in the mid-century years oversaw important acquisitions and wrote some of the museum’s pioneering catalogues. The truth is that many, if not most, of the essential monuments of the Metropolitan’s collection were acquired decades, even generations, ago. So the scandals of recent times do not have that much to do with the core of the museum’s collection, although of course the seamier side of the antiquities trade is a very old story—

a story that some would say dates back to ancient times, when Romans hungry for statues to decorate their villas did not care how their agents got the goods out of Greece. The essential theme of Picón’s essay, a theme that is never stated outright, is that even if some of the treasures in the Metropolitan were not exactly honestly acquired, the curators who built the department have been animated by the most serious sort of engagement with the art of the ancient world.

There is an extraordinarily satisfying solidity about the new presentation of ancient art at the Metropolitan. The works are deployed with a lucidity that allows them to tell their own stories, and this means that what you find here are many, many stories. My guess is that most people instinctively pick and choose which stories they take in. The resplendent arrangement of Roman paintings, for example, has struck a chord in quite a few museumgoers, who see more clearly than ever before how much European painting owes to antiquity. There is a feeling of generosity about these galleries—in the beautiful marble floors, the abundant light, the well-paced displays. Visitors are being very well treated indeed, and that leaves them free to look and to wonder and to dream. Everything feels clean-swept, burnished, honey-dipped. There is something almost sacerdotal about the way the spaces unfold, with that central spine of classical sculpture leading to Greek funerary monuments, Roman wall paintings, Etruscan bronzes. The experience is irresistible, a heady mix of the sensuous and the cerebral, the pagan and the austere.

II.

CLASSICISM originated in the most basic of artistic urges: the urge to represent the human figure. And the classical struggle to reconcile the rival claims of reason and passion found a perfect expression in the body of the warrior or the athlete, the body that was at once a machine engineered to accomplish certain tasks and an object of pure erotic delight. The longer you look at the art of the ancient world, the more you can see that both realism and idealism were techniques for mapping human consciousness, for giving a concrete form to the fundamentally human recognition that we must take responsibility for the space that we occupy in the world.

The new Greek and Roman Galleries, which present nothing less than the beginnings of art in the West, raise aesthetics to the level of myth. But whose myths are we actually seeing? When I sit among these fragments of the classical world, I do not find myself thinking of classicism in the eighteenth-century sense of a perfect resolution of basic conflicts. Instead I am struck by the extent to which Western art is primarily and essentially an art of volume and mass and weight. And of course such an intuition is itself a reframing of classicism as a formalist idea—a modern myth, if you will.

But is it merely a modern myth? Or is it a modern myth that overlaps with certain ancient myths? John Onians, in a fascinating book called *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome*, begins by explaining that in Greek creation myths there is an idea that mankind was made from stone, and he contrasts this with the thinking of people “who lived in the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia and elsewhere [and thought] of themselves as made of clay,” an infinitely more malleable material. Onians asserts that the creation of figures out of stone occurs among the inhabitants of the Aegean and the Greek peninsula much earlier than elsewhere in the world, and he speculates that these people “must have experienced an unconscious affinity with the rock with which they were surrounded.” Now here is an ancient creation story that forms a convincing prologue to the art of Michelangelo and Brancusi, in which the emphasis is always on the centeredness of the masses, on the gravitational pull of the forms, on the sense of the work of art as a massing of energies that displaces other energies in the world.

Onians sees an underlying emphasis on force in Greek art and architecture, an interest in clearly shaping and realizing forms and spaces that he relates to the appetite for competitive sports and the fascination with the art of war. Others will detect an essential belligerence, or at least an aggressive swagger, in the art of the ancient world as it is represented at the Metropolitan, where muscled bodies again and again take center stage. But it is also true that in the classical tradition the very concentration of forms can signify the containment or masking of feeling. A fine case is the image of Athena, the goddess of war, whose boldly articulated facial features suggest a focusing of martial powers. The weight of a form does not necessarily suggest belligerence. In red-figure pottery the silhouetted figures register as powerfully

self-contained personalities, sometimes as almost quietistic. And the still-life objects in Roman wall painting have their own kind of inward-turning volumetric power. The values of weight, mass, and volume that characterize Western art can suggest psychological concentration or erotic receptivity as easily as they can suggest athletic aggression. Indeed, the merging of power and passivity is one of the most striking features of ancient art, especially in what has come to be thought of as the high classical period, in the late fifth century.

Of course, mass, volume, and weight were often complicated and enriched in the ancient world by the play of lines across surfaces and the patterning and interweaving of forms, interests that we often understand as originating in the East and flowing into the Mediterranean world along the Silk Road. That Western art is an art of mass and Eastern art is an art of surfaces is a sweeping generalization, but there is a kernel of truth in it. This is not to say that there are not sculptural traditions in Asia in which mass plays a powerful role. And before we assume that an art that values line over volume is essentially non-Western, we must remember the deliciously sensitive line engravings on Etruscan bronze mirrors, or for that matter the story that Pliny tells of the competition between Apelles and Protogenes, two great painters who wanted to prove which of them could draw the most beautiful single line. Still, there is an indisputable Mediterranean emphasis on the importance of sculptural masses that begins with the kouros figures and remains a powerful tradition down to our own day. It is a tradition that quite obviously animates the work of Masaccio and Raphael in the Renaissance, but it also informs the pitcher in a still life by Chardin and the powerful assertion of the red rectangle in a painting by Mondrian. This is a tradition that we invoke every time we speak of the weight of a brushstroke, the weight of a color. In this Mediterranean tradition, the power of form almost invariably registers as an assertion of the self.

IT IS NOT surprising that the Metropolitan's collection, which was to a large extent formed in the first half of the twentieth century, reflects a modern affinity with the prehistory and the dawn of the Greek experience. In the earlier Greek and Roman Galleries, you will find premonitions of Brancusi, of Arp, of Modigliani's sculpture, of the paintings of Picasso's Rose Period. The marble figures carved between 3000 and

2500 B.C.E., these earliest expressions of the art of the Aegean, mark the beginnings of the classical yearning to make order of life's chaos. There is a tempering of unruly experience in the Cycladic image of the head as a flat plane punctuated by the triangular promontory of the nose, a distillation of the body into a geometry of signs and symbols, a beautifully restrained formality. And in the meticulously gridded and ruled surfaces of the geometric-style pottery that dates from the eighth century B.C.E., the image of a soldier carrying a great shield has a summary, epigrammatic power that prefigures the personages of Klee and Miró.

A few steps away, we are confronted by the kouros figure from the sixth century that is one of the essential treasures of the Metropolitan; it came into the collection in 1932. In this masterpiece, you can feel the Greeks moving away from the hieratic rigidities of Egyptian sculpture, turning from the bracing generalization that is Egyptian anatomy to a new interest in poetic particularization. Here is the adolescent boy who epitomizes the adolescence of the classical tradition, a boy who is just beginning to feel the power of his slim torso and powerful thighs, whose narcissism is still tamped down, whose flesh has not quite yet been sprung from the chrysalis of geometry.

The galleries at the Metropolitan offer a number of works in which one can glimpse the full power of the classical style of the fifth and fourth centuries. A head of a smiling youth from around 490 B.C.E. has a remarkable expressive easiness. A grave marker of a woman, with her head bent in thought, has a pensive yet voluptuous impact that brings to mind the muses of Ingres and Corot. And there is a mysterious lyric rhythm to a group of funerary lekythos, stone monuments shaped like great oil flasks and carved with serenely lovely figural reliefs.

Still, there are many aspects of Greek and Roman art that will remain closed to museumgoers at the Metropolitan. In the ancient world, sculpture was as often as not knit deep into the architectural fabric, and there is nothing in New York that even brings you near the sense of the figure as an expression of the abstract force of architecture that you find in the Parthenon marbles in London or the Pergamon Altar in Berlin. The stirring vehemence of Hellenistic carving can look slightly rhetorical, at times almost comic, at the Metropolitan, where there are few works, even fragmentary

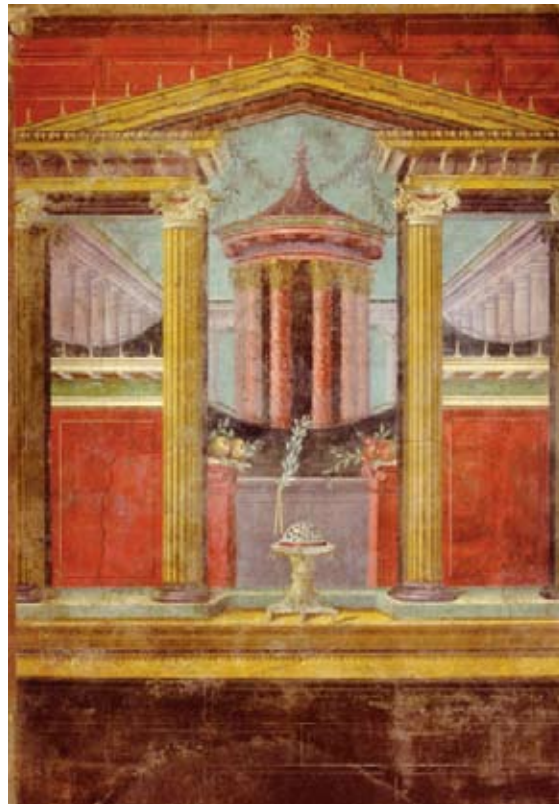
works, that come close to the powerful expression of muscular pressures in the *Belvedere Torso* and the *Laocoön* in Rome and the *Barberini Faun* in Munich.

Looking at Roman copies of Greek originals, whether at the Metropolitan or at any other great museum, can be like reading tea leaves, but of course the fact is that the lion's share of what we know of Greek sculpture is from Roman copies. A copy of a statue of a young man by Polykleitos is a key work for the understanding of this great sculptor's achievement, but as an object in its own right it has an icy fixity that suggests Roman nostalgia rather than Greek discovery. Yet there is at least one Roman marble copy at the Metropolitan, of a mid-fifth-century Greek bronze of a wounded warrior, with a tensed physical power that suggests some terrifying mixture of guts and fear and pride. This statue evokes the rippling muscular fluidity that we know from the bronzes that have been recovered from the sea in the last hundred years, nearly all of which are in Greece and Italy.

THE INSTALLATIONS at the Metropolitan are intelligently paced, wisely varied. I was intrigued by some plaster reliefs in the Roman galleries, playful and almost painterly in their manipulation of the soft material into figures that suggest the ease of Bernini's terra-cottas. And then there are the galleries devoted to Etruscan art, where classical forms are given a particular, almost naïve weight and pungency. Among the objects that struck me most strongly here was a large cista, a toiletries box, a grand bronze cylinder engraved with scenes of combat. The handle on its lid is a figure group. Two winged genii carry on their outstretched arms the body of a dead soldier, and his stiffly horizontal form makes a shocking contrast with the easygoing fluidity of these unearthly youths, whose wings are so magnificently dynamic, whose legs stride so confidently forward. This is an astonishing image of youth, heroism, and loss.

The curators at the Metropolitan have rejected the frequently overstuffed exhibition style of earlier museum displays without falling into the dangers of an ultramodern sort of jewel-box display. There are smaller exhibition cases in the side galleries that present arrays of objects that reflect the intricacies

of daily life, albeit among the very wealthy. There are miracles of craft and elegance to be found among the gold jewelry, the terra-cotta and alabaster and marble containers for perfume, the tiny carved boxes, and it is fascinating to see how the simplest motifs, a seashell or a palm leaf, can be adumbrated in a great variety of materials. The museum's splendid holdings in Greek pottery are given breathing space. In some galleries pottery is winningly mingled with sculpture; in other galleries there are more historically focused displays that aim to articulate the styles of particular painters. Masterpieces stand out,



Detail of a fresco, circa 50–40 B.C.E.

among them the neck amphora, attributed to the Lykaon Painter, on which the youthful warrior Neoptolemos, utterly at ease in his long, lean body, extends his hand to his father in an infinitely elegant gesture of farewell. There are intimate spaces tucked away amid the grand spaces in the Greek and Roman Galleries, especially a Hellenistic treasury, where it is possible to focus on the pyrotechnical intricacies of ancient metalwork. Among the wonders gathered here is a bronze statue of a veiled and masked dancer, from the third or second century B.C.E., which is a miracle of movement, with the dancer's right foot raised from the ground as she spins and

whirls, suggesting a kinetic power perhaps not seen again in sculpture until Degas's dancers more than two thousand years later.

In ancient art, virtuosity can sometimes seem to be more greatly prized than beauty, and it is one of the fascinations of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that when virtuosity is turned to the rendering of naturalistic effects, artists may be less concerned with establishing the truth than with creating an illusion. The evocation of fabric through bronze in that astonishing little study of a dancer has some of the quality of a magic trick. Ancient renderings of the old and the weak may be meant to evoke pity, but what they more often invite is an admiration for the artist who has tugged at our heartstrings. The statue of an old woman, a first-century C.E. copy of a late second-century B.C.E. original, is fierce in its unremitting rendering of the furrowed face, the bent posture, and the sagging breasts. The loss of health is observed with such intimacy that it cannot but have some moralizing import, though I am also left wondering if what is at work here is a voyeuristic pagan fascination with physicality in all its harrowing variety. Here we confront a hyperbolic naturalism that is a celebration of artfulness before it is a celebration of life. This is naturalism as a form of mannerism, which perhaps suggests why it was that for the ancients classicism was finally the true face of reality.

The consciousness of stylistic choice, which is sometimes said to be a modern phenomenon, was already at play in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. The Romans understood that classical idealism would not do where portraits of themselves and their families were concerned, and indeed the hyperbolic naturalism of the Hellenistic world would not do either, so it was replaced by a plain-spoken psychological naturalism that we only encounter again more than a thousand years later, when the merchant classes of the late Middle Ages sat for their portraits. Some of the essential examples of ancient realism in the Metropolitan are the portraits done in Roman Egypt in the second century C.E. that hang in the Egyptian Galleries. Painted in encaustic and preserved in burial sites, the easy naturalism of these modest yet unforgettable likenesses provides some of our most important insights into the

nature of classical painting, one of the grand arts of the ancient world of which we have only the most fragmentary remains. I wonder if there is some way for these portraits to be placed on permanent loan from the Egyptian department to the Greek and Roman Galleries, where they could add immeasurably to what is already a magnificent display of Roman painting.

The wall paintings from southern Italy, long treasures of the Metropolitan, have never looked as good as they do now. Unabashedly decorative in their intentions, designed to form a backdrop for the luxurious lives of wealthy Romans, these paintings reflect the ebullient theatricality of ancient art, whether in the boldly cubified, wittily toy-like rendering of a city in a bedroom from a villa at Boscoreale, or in the playful arabesques, a veritable rehearsal of the eighteenth-century rococo, in another bedroom, this one from Boscotrecase. But there are also, here and there among the paintings, glimpses of emotional depths—in the enchanting dark eyes and sideways glance of a woman playing a lyre and in the famous glass bowl full of fruit in the Boscoreale bedroom, a still life of a subtlety that points all the way to Cézanne.

III.

THERE IS SO MUCH packed into the Greek and Roman Galleries that you may have to remind yourself that this expansive presentation is telescopic, a distillation. The compression of time and geography that we experience in these galleries, the sense of the art of the ancient world as something that can be embraced in the course of a few hours—this is a falsification of the past that enables us to give a shape to the past. And when we give a shape to the past, we are also uncovering a truth about the past. It was by looking back at the gradually shifting styles of Greek art that the ancients themselves first began to appreciate stylistic distinctions, began to see a classical moment in the fifth century that they endeavored to reclaim centuries later. And for Europeans since the end of the Middle Ages there has been an ever-widening sense of the ancient world as containing a range of styles, not only moments of stylistic equilibrium but also periods of stylistic imbalance. We take it for granted that Donatello, Michelangelo, Bernini, and Brancusi each had a separate but equal grasp of the classical tradition.

There has never been a period that did not remake the ancient world in its own image, so it is not surprising that in

our democratic times we are so extraordinarily attuned to antiquity's stylistic pluralism. I think it is Picasso, more than any other artist, who taught us to see ancient art in terms of these multiplying dialectics, in terms of the vigorous struggles that Gide described. In Picasso's work antiquity is kaleidoscopic, an ever-shifting array of allusions to a range of ancient styles—archaic, early classical, high classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Etruscan—which enable him to represent everything from Apollonian thought to Dionysian passion, from dreamy passivity to raging libido. Even within a single work, Picasso sometimes introduces several antique styles, giving a fifth-century B.C.E. purity to a young woman while he describes an older man with all the rhetorical flourishes of the Hellenistic baroque. For Picasso, the ancient world became a dream world, a memory theater, an encyclopedia of the passions, and museumgoers are going to feel the tug of that ancient magic.

But there was something else, I think, that Picasso loved about ancient art, something that will also strike visitors to the Greek and Roman Galleries at the Metropolitan. This is the absolute power with which materials are handled. (It was surely Picasso's desire to beat the ancient potters at their own game that set him to work in Vallauris after World War II, where he produced enough plates and vases and pitchers to fill the needs of a medium-sized Roman city.) Before he was anything else, the ancient artist was a materialist, focused on the hunk of marble or the pile of clay or the bit of gold on his workroom table. And there was a kind of genius about the intensity with which these ancient craftsmen worked stone, clay, glass, bone, bronze, gold, and silver. They never forgot that they were making an object, a thing.

And this brings us back to the weight of ancient art—not just to the weight of the materials, but also to the weight of attention that was brought to bear on these materials, to the sense of classical style as a celebration of mass, volume, weight. In the modern world, culture has too often become something light, an atmosphere or a mood that can be turned on or shut off at will. So it can be startling, and also somehow consoling, to confront the fierce, full-out materiality of ancient art. Going through the Greek and Roman Galleries, I am reminded, time and again, that the life of forms, so often regarded as a play of the imagination, originates in the brute force of materials. Classical style begins with classical weight. ♦

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Sam Tanenhaus

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

From Whittaker Chambers to George W. Bush.

I. IN LATE 1988, when I set out to write a life of Whittaker Chambers, the cold war had reached its ceremonial endgame: Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledging the autonomy of peoples long after they had liberated themselves, valiant students halting tank columns in Tiananmen Square. It was an impressive, if occasionally hollow, spectacle, and it inspired a chorus of sweeping pronouncements in the United States. “‘Peace’ seems to be breaking out in many regions of the world,” Francis Fukuyama exulted in *The End of History*, the signature manifesto of the moment, published in the summer of 1989, six months before the Berlin Wall came down. In those euphoric days it was still possible to think, with Fukuyama, that “the developed world,” having writhed through a century-long “paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism, then bolshevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war,” had suddenly achieved “an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.”

It did not take long for the gyre to wobble back onto its dependably blood-soaked course, pushed along by fresh gusts of ideological violence and absolutism. Yet for a brief period it really did seem that history, if it had not actually ended, had at least paused, particularly for people born in the 1950s. The cold war was the only geopolitical reality that we knew, or could seriously contemplate, raised as we were on the eschatology of the nuclear “option,” with its expert mathematical formulas that explained how many cities we could afford to have vaporized, and which ones, in the event of a “showdown.” Every child knew the “ultimate apocalypse” was thinkable. We all had watched footage of blossoming mushroom clouds and fictive images of a finger pushing a button. And it was thinkable for a more literal reason: it had already happened, twice, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And we knew who had dropped the bombs.

In such a climate, politics unfolded as a constant low-grade emergency, with occasional oscillations and pulse-quicken-

alarms: the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, the planes shot out of the sky. We were calmly assured, after each bleak episode, that all was being efficiently managed. And perhaps it was. But the stresses showed, most obviously in the near normalization of violence in the 1960s, much of it televised: racial battles in city after city, armed militants storming campus buildings. The first presidential election I followed closely—in 1968, when I was a boy—included two assassinations and a police riot.

This was the steep cost of “the twilight struggle,” in John F. Kennedy’s lugubrious phrase, the contest between the planet’s only remaining great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, lethally well-matched colossi—each geographically vast, each primed, after many years on the sidelines, to dominate the global game. Each also espoused a purifying doctrine, the Soviets’ derived from Marx by way of Lenin, the Americans’ derived from ... what exactly? Here was the trouble. A nation so new and so devout in its pluralism could offer no theology but itself, the miracle of its existence, in all its superabundance, the same theology our leaders offer today. During the cold war, our presidents, each in his turn the “leader of the free world,” told us we were innocent of imperial ambition and desired only that other peoples be free—free, that is, to become like us. This applied not only to the “captive nations” behind the Iron Curtain, but also to the left-leaning social democracies of corrupt Europe. The battle was moral, for “hearts and minds.” Of course, this was what the Soviets also claimed—in a different vocabulary, to be sure—about their utopian project.

SO MY QUESTION was not why there had been a cold war, but rather how it had come to assume its curious shape. This led me immediately to George Orwell, the truest prophet of the “twilight struggle,” whose *1984*, published in the incubatory stage of the cold war, had foretold much of what was to come: the all-seeing television eye, the creepy language (Orwell could easily have coined “balance of terror,” “limited nuclear war,” and “mutually assured destruction”), the proxy wars staged in

distant regions of the globe (Vietnam, Afghanistan, the Congo—the Congo?), the orchestrated paranoia. It was all the more persuasive because Orwell’s strength, as everyone knows, was his literalism, his English “common sense.” He was not an especially imaginative writer. Yet he had seen with matchless clarity where things were headed, and this in turn suggested his novel had been as much a feat of reportorial study as of invention: his starting point had been a concrete set of facts.

But which facts? Perhaps the time had come to write *1984* in reverse. You could begin, like Orwell, with the year 1948, but your account would be factual. It would describe what had actually happened that year. There was no shortage of events to choose from: the Berlin blockade, the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the advances of Mao’s Red Army, the formation of Korea’s “Democratic Republic,” the disintegration of governments in Greece and Belgium, and all the rest. Except that this history had to take place not abroad but in America, where the cold war—one side of it, anyway—had sprung into being.

Who would figure in such a tale? Who would be the hero, or the villain? I found myself examining the case of Alger Hiss, the senior diplomat who, in the summer of 1948, was accused in hearings held by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) of being a Soviet agent, and then stood trial twice for lying about it. From the opening days of congressional testimony up through Hiss’s perjury conviction, in January 1950, the event had attained the scope of a great political trial. There had been a clash of ideas and worldviews, moments of genuine surprise and reversal. And there had been serious consequences. The case had initiated the Red hunts (or “witch hunts”) of the early 1950s, which themselves mirrored postwar purges in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, though the outcome in America had been much milder. Political figures such as Rudolf Slánský and László Rajk were branded Titoist “spies” when they dared resist

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Stalin's clenching grip and were then rushed through mock trials and summarily executed. In the United States the purge had been bloodless. Well, almost. The "atom spies" Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, were killed—an appalling and unwarranted fate, but one the defendants had consciously chosen, even when plea bargains were available. Still, the scent of blood had hung in the air.

But not in the Hiss case. There had been much posturing, along with naked displays of opportunism, during the HUAC hearings, but the trials had been models of restraint. Even Hiss's sentence was surpassingly mild: five years in a minimum-security prison in Pennsylvania. He was released sixteen months ahead of schedule, emerging a better man by his own account, and he lived to the age of ninety-two. The very ordinariness of this outcome—and Hiss's continued presence as a hero-victim—felt right for the story that I wanted to tell. It usefully showed that the case had been absorbed into the larger narrative of cold-war America.

There were complications, however. For one, there was strong evidence that Hiss, unlike Slánský and Rajk, really had been a spy. This did not bother me very much. A guilty man is often more interesting than an innocent one. And I was drawn to the arc of Hiss's public life, the familiar tale of a rapid upward climb—triumph at Johns Hopkins University and then at Harvard Law, clerk to Supreme Court giant Oliver Wendell Holmes, State Department mandarin, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace at age forty-two—followed by a terrible fall. This was matched by the suggestive data of a private life rich in misery and shame. Hiss had grown up in Baltimore in conditions of shabby gentility, his family well established but in decline. There were two brutal suicides (Hiss's father and sister), plus his beloved older brother's lethal alcoholism (during the Prohibition period). Hiss, the survivor, had borne this suffering stoically, but the wounds were deep. Though a gentle man, he did not wholly suppress the contempt he felt for the bluestockings among whom he had been reared, the "horrible old women of Baltimore." More telling, at the peak of the Moscow show trials, when former heroes of the revolution had been sent to slaughter, Hiss had observed, coolly and admiringly, that Stalin "plays for keeps." Hiss's most salient trait, the one outward clue to

the Bolshevik within, was his discipline. It had seen him through much.

Yet this same discipline ultimately made him uninteresting, as was glaringly evident during the HUAC sessions. One could understand why he tenaciously maintained his innocence and wriggled out, insofar as he could, from under the mounting evidence. What rankled was his refusal to bring even a hint of imagination to his role. In the tensest moments of the hearings—moments that came as close as any in an event so ritualized ever can to offering the prospect of authentic revelation—Hiss refused, time and again, to declare himself, to say who he was and what he really stood for. Instead, retreating behind his boyish grin and well-tailored suits, he took refuge in hedged lawyerly answers, hair-splitting qualifications, and murky evasions. He was a "flat" rather than a "round" character, whose one idea of how to meet the signal crisis in his life was to pose as a Gilbert and Sullivan parody of the civil servant.

This dismal performance stood in almost comical defiance of the truth, for it was well known that Hiss had belonged to the most radical faction of the New Deal in its first, experimental phase, when it had included burgeoning leftists enrolled in communist "study groups" and in secret "cells." So common was this knowledge that when Hiss was girding for his first HUAC appearance, his sponsor at the Carnegie Endowment, John Foster Dulles, the most conservative of men (later secretary of state under President Eisenhower), had suggested he might satisfy the committee if he simply confessed that he had flirted with communism in the 1930s like so many others, but had since put it behind him. Hiss, rejecting this advice, instead claimed an improbably pristine past. Far from having been a communist, he asserted he had not even known any communists; what was more, he seemed mystified by the accusations being made against him, though he eventually owned that he had been questioned closely on these same matters by FBI agents a year or two before and had abruptly quit the State Department in 1946 amid public speculation that he had a long record of "leftist activity."

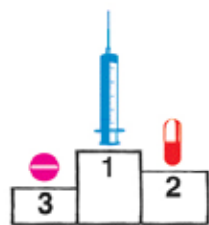
Hiss's denials offered a perverse symmetry to the abject confessions of the "old Bolsheviks" whom Stalin had ruthlessly destroyed during the Mos-

cow show trials in the late 1930s. Like those defendants, Hiss seemed to share his inquisitors' assumptions about the gravity of the offenses being imputed to him. But there the similarities ended. Stalin's victims, resigned to imprisonment or death, submitted to the incontestable "logic" of the revolution in one last demonstration of loyalty to it. The suspected American communist, in contrast, had ample room to maneuver in 1948, particularly if he was a trained lawyer and accomplished careerist who had risen swiftly through the government bureaucracy. Hiss's agility had made him a good diplomat, an excellent spy, and, initially at least, a virtuosic witness, though in the end he overdid it, ostentatiously pulling social rank on HUAC's yahoos and its staff of gumshoes.

What Hiss personified, finally, was a social and political type commonly found within its favored class in mature democracies: the covert enemy of the establishment who confidently trades on establishment privileges—snobbery, social pride, "old school" ties, inveterate name-dropping. It is not just an American phenomenon. Hiss had a counterpart in the Cambridge spies, who like him were at once audacious and self-serving and whose public embrace of the "proletariat" grew, like his, out of a private history of hidden injuries and abasements. Orwell, again, grasped this phenomenon at its root. "It was only *after* the Soviet regime became unmistakably totalitarian that English intellectuals, in large numbers, began to show an interest in it," he had written in the mid-1940s. That interest, he added, betrayed "a secret wish ... [to] usher in a hierarchical society where the intellectual can at last get his hands on the whip." It is no less true today. The intellectual left, most conspicuously in its Ivy League, Manhattan, and Hollywood variants, still clings to its dream of the whip handle, just as the educated right dreams of the day when the intelligentsia will be the first to feel the stinging cord.

II.

SO ALGER HISS disappointed; but his accuser did not. To reread transcripts and contemporary reportage of the hearings and the trials is to be startled by the almost mesmeric force exerted by Whittaker Chambers, who was not only the prosecution's chief (and, on key matters, sole) witness, but also, in the language of the day, a "self-confessed ex-communist," in this case, a former courier for the Soviet spy network who still seemed morally trapped within



the nimbus of his past crimes. That such a man existed in the flesh, and, what was more, had come tumbling into view from the gilded pinnacle of the Time-Life Building in Rockefeller Center, was itself a remarkable fact at a time when the home-grown “communist menace” still consisted, in the public mind, of immigrant Jews or shadowy figures such as the Comintern official Gerhart Eisler, who had sneaked out of the country, aboard a liner headed for Poland, while awaiting trial in New York. Whittaker Chambers was one of the few American communists his countrymen had laid eyes on.

And a curious specimen he was, with his risibly WASPy name, the toad-like somnolence of his physical being, the cadaverous-looking dark suit too long in the sleeves, the wry half-smile verging at times on a smirk, hinting at arcane and hideous truths available to him alone. Strange that such a man had been a communist spy, and stranger still that he was an “old-stock” American and also an intellectual—indeed, much more of one in the traditional humanistic sense than Hiss. A gifted literary man and a largely self-taught linguist, Chambers had been a published poet in his twenties, and translated Heinrich Mann and Franz Werfel from the German, and mastered French sufficiently well to have been commissioned to translate the last volume of Proust. When FBI interrogators showed him the final report that they had written after grilling him for many months, Chambers had scrawled on the last of its many pages the concluding line of the *Inferno*: *E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle*, “and we came outside again to look at the stars.” “He spoke Gypsy!” his longtime friend Meyer Schapiro, the great art historian, told me in 1990, the astonishment still fresh.

Not that this earned him much respect. Chambers-hatred stayed robust in American intellectual and political life for many decades after the Hiss verdict and after Chambers’s death in 1961. Though few remembered the details of the great case, many had a vivid picture of “the witness”—that is, of the turncoat and snitch. They blamed him for the rise both of Richard Nixon, who as a thirty-five-year-old freshman congressman ingeniously stage-managed the HUAC hearings, and of Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose first carnal bleats—“I have here in my hand” and so on—came fifteen days after Hiss’s sentencing in the winter of 1950.

I HAD DOUBTS about Whittaker Chambers, too. I was aware of him chiefly because of my longstanding interest in the intellectual world of the 1930s to the 1950s. Chambers was known to many of the period’s best writers, but few had anything good to say about him. Saul Bellow once wittily remarked that Chambers had done more public harm as the culture editor of *Time* than as the accuser of Alger Hiss—a judgment colored, no doubt, by Chambers’s having rather hilariously dismissed Bellow one or two days into a film-reviewing job at the magazine in 1943, when Bellow was a postulant freelancer recommended to Chambers by their mutual friend James Agee. (In later years Bellow often related this incident with retrospective delight, and a version of it appears, in veiled form, in his novel *The Victim*.)

Chambers’s relationship with another major figure, Lionel Trilling, was more complicated and ambiguous. The two had a history dating back many years, beginning with their days together at Columbia University in the 1920s, when

both were undergraduates and contributors to the campus literary magazine. Chambers was the more mature writer (as Trilling readily conceded, and the mentor they shared, the poet Mark Van Doren, agreed). But he also burned with extra-literary hungers. He was, Trilling later recalled, “the first person I ever knew whose commitment to radical politics was meant to be definitive of his whole moral being, the controlling element of his existence.” And there was a shocking physical emblem of Chambers’s Otherness,

his gruesomely decayed teeth. (They were not fixed until he got to *Time*, and this dental history would occasion some absurdist byplay during the Hiss confrontation.) “That desolated mouth was the perfect insigne of Chambers’s moral authority,” Trilling wrote. “It annihilated the hygienic American present—only a serf could have such a mouth, or some student in a visored cap who sat in his Moscow garret and thought of nothing save the moment when he would toss the fatal canister into the barouche of the Grand Duke.”

The two reconnected in the 1930s when Chambers, after some years in the “open” Communist Party, joined its conspiratorial underground and was doing minor industrial espionage; Trilling, safely nestled in the outer orbit of fellow travelers, observed Chambers’s revolutionary escapades with mingled amusement and awe. *The Middle of the Journey*, Trilling’s penetrating novel about the left of the 1930s, published in 1947, includes a character modeled closely on Chambers, a communist defector shunned in New York intellectual circles when he re-emerges from the Soviet underground, exactly as Chambers had been shunned when he quit the party in 1938. A decade later, when the Hiss case went to trial, a defense lawyer, scouring literary Manhattan for acquaintances of Chambers who might impugn his character, approached Trilling but was sent away with the admonition that “Whittaker Chambers is a man of honor.”

In his last years Trilling seemed embarrassed by this remark and studiously put distance between himself and Chambers, explaining that, yes, he had known Chambers for many years, and yes, he believed Chambers had told the truth about Hiss, but hastening to add that Chambers had not, of course, been his “friend.” In fact, the two had been close enough for Chambers to sound out Trilling’s wife, Diana, herself a formidable writer and critic, for “secret work” in 1933. “I knew that I was not going to do what he asked of me,” Diana Trilling later wrote. “Yet I was enormously flattered that he thought me capable of such an assignment and I was ashamed to refuse him.... I felt greatly complimented.”

Here, then, was the truth about the intellectuals and Chambers. They admired him even as they recoiled from him. His moral authority exceeded theirs: while they had clung to the movement’s shallows, Chambers had pitched himself into its depths, as if preparing for the moment when he would be summoned forth to play a historic role. This indeed

At the Cathedral’s Foot

In June once, in the evening,
returning from a long trip,
with memories of France’s blooming trees
still fresh in our minds,
its yellow fields, green plane trees
sprinting before the car,

we sat on the curb at the cathedral’s foot
and spoke softly about disasters,
about what lay ahead, the coming fear,
and someone said this was the best
we could do now—
to talk of darkness in that bright shadow.

ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI

Translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh

happened, and while the role he was assigned—as witness, or scourge—was not one he ever expected to play, it was one for which he was superbly cast, with his gravid air of fatalism, of persecution and guilt, of tormented secrecy and penitential disclosure. Even so, the charges he made against Hiss (and others) came forth reluctantly. Not only that: he perjured himself repeatedly on Hiss's behalf, until Hiss, in a fatal miscalculation, dared him to produce evidence that would substantiate his charges.

THAT Chambers's disclosures were truthful we now know with certainty, confirmed as they were by documents released from Soviet and American intelligence archives in the 1990s. Today very few seriously maintain that Chambers's testimony was inaccurate in any meaningful way, although periodically there are new attempts to exonerate Hiss. The latest came this spring, at a conference called "Alger Hiss and History" at New York University. Two participants—Kai Bird, the biographer of J. Robert Oppenheimer and a contributing editor at *The Nation*, and Svetlana Chernovonnaya, a historian based in Moscow—jointly argued that one important item in the vast mosaic of archival evidence (an intercepted cable in the "Venona" traffic, first released in 1995) possibly referred not to Hiss, as most scholars had thought, but to a diplomat named Wilder Foote, who had been Hiss's colleague in the State Department.

It was a flimsy argument, as the historians John Haynes and Harvey Klehr have painstakingly demonstrated—not to mention a rather cavalier smearing of Foote. And Bird has subsequently conceded that his reading of this single cable goes no distance toward refuting Chambers's testimony. And yet this tiny filament was eagerly seized by those determined to revive the familiar argument that the prosecution of Hiss—and with it the entire effort to investigate the activities of the clandestine Soviet spy operations in the American government—is best understood as part of a broader, sinister campaign to purge American politics of the progressive legacy of the 1930s and 1940s. The Hiss trials, Bird told *The Washington Post*, raised a question about the future of American liberalism in the years when the cold war consensus was beginning to form: "Was it going to be the liberalism of the Franklin Roosevelt stripe, the New Deal vision of a communitarian society that takes care of its own and the poor, or was it

going to be sort of a neo-liberalism that stood up to the communists and turned its back on the New Deal vision?" Or, as the organizers of the NYU conference put it, even more stridently, the Hiss case was a "major moment in postwar America that reinforced cold war ideology and accelerated America's late-1940s turn to the right."

It is instructive that this vague formulation, with its attempt to equate an ill-defined "cold war ideology" with a "turn to the right," should command the assent of professional historians who presumably know the actual facts, including that Hiss was prosecuted for perjury under Truman, whose administration sustained almost every facet of the New Deal program—and indeed expanded it into the realm of civil rights—and that Truman's Republican successor, Dwight Eisenhower, also kept New Deal programs in place, as did the next president, John F. Kennedy, who campaigned on a strongly anti-communist platform. All three subscribed to one version or another of "cold war ideology," which is to say all three opposed the consolidation of the Soviet empire.

More striking still is that Hiss's champions for six decades now have steadfastly excused the actions of liberals who were consistently sympathetic to the Soviet Union and its repressions. But hadn't those liberals also produced liberal values? This was the question that guided Orwell's observation about the British intelligentsia, and that led Sidney Hook, in an essay titled "The Future of Socialism," published eighteen months before the Hiss case, to note the contradictions of "totalitarian liberals" who backed the third-party presidential campaign of Henry Wallace and its call, under the name of "progressivism," for a rapprochement with the USSR. The Wallace-ites, Hook wrote, seemed wedded to "the semantic confusion according to which Russia is a democracy of another kind." Stalin the democrat! It was this paradox that inspired Trilling to declare Chambers a man of honor and thus imply that those intent on discrediting him were well on their way to dishonoring themselves. Chambers, naturally, believed this as well, and in a distinctly personal way, having felt the wrath of liberals, among them his colleagues at *Time*, who eagerly participated in what John Dos Passos, in his review of Chambers's memoir *Witness* in 1952, described as "the moral lynching of Whittaker Chambers by the right-thinking people of this country."

III.

BY THIS TIME Chambers had assumed his second historic role, the one that most compels our interest today. He had become a principal founder of modern American conservatism. There were already hints of it before the Hiss case—for example, in his historical fable "The Ghosts on the Roof," published in *Time* in March 1945, a month after the Yalta summit, when Chambers was the magazine's foreign news editor. At the time the Big Three accord was almost universally praised, and an enfeebled Roosevelt, weeks away from death, had gone before Congress to summarize all that had been won. Yet the clear victor was Stalin, still a war-time ally and a hero to many. But he was not a hero in Chambers's analysis. His view, whimsically put in the mouths of the murdered royal "ghosts" of the 1917 revolution, was that Stalin was the latest and most audacious of the Russian czars, "greater than Rurik, greater than Peter! For Peter conquered only in the name of a limited class. But Stalin embodies the international social revolution. That is the mighty, new device of power politics which he has developed for blowing up other countries from within."

Chambers the Cassandra could be heard also at key moments in the Hiss case—most memorably when he and Hiss were at last brought together publicly, and Chambers was asked (by Nixon) about rumors that his accusations arose from some obscure personal animus (involving, it was speculated, both mental illness and homosexuality). Rather than attack his attackers, Chambers accepted the burden of moral guilt and recast it in the rhetoric of high sacrifice: "The story has spread that in testifying against Mr. Hiss I am working out some old grudge, or motives of revenge or hatred. I do not hate Mr. Hiss. We were close friends, but we are caught in a tragedy of history. Mr. Hiss represents the concealed enemy against which we all are fighting, and I am fighting. I have testified against him with remorse and pity, but in a moment of historic jeopardy in which this nation now stands, so help me God I could not do otherwise."

It was classic Chambers, down to the echo of Martin Luther ("*ich kann nicht anders*"), fraught with suppressed melodrama. In one sense, he was not an intellectual at all. He was certainly not a systematic thinker in the manner, say, of his friend James Burnham, the ex-Trotskyist reborn as right-wing sage whose analysis of modern bureaucracy, *The Managerial Revolution*, had been

crucial to Orwell's conception of the totalitarian world in *1984*, and whose aggressive "rollback" doctrine much later provided the theoretical basis for the Bush administration's doctrine of pre-emption in the "war on terror." What Chambers had, instead, was imagination. No one ever spun cold war poetry as he did—reams of it, first in *Time* and then in *Witness*. He was the first great technician of the new era's magnificent cant.

At the time very few saw this. Or, more precisely, they noticed the cant but not the magnificence, partly because Chambers's tone was distinctly old-fashioned. Though steeped in the Modernists, he was untouched by them. His models were Augustine, Hugo, and above all Dostoevsky. His preferred contemporaries were Koestler (a reciprocal admirer), Malraux (ditto), and Camus. Czesław Miłosz, who never met Chambers, wrote to me in a letter that "I have always felt great sympathy for him and thought about his tragic life. He suffered much ... and was excluded from the circle of people worthy of having their hands shaken." Chambers did not find full fellowship until the spring of 1959, two years before his death, when he traveled to Europe at the urging of Koestler, who arranged for him to meet Manès Sperber, the great Galician novelist (and ex-communist), and also introduced him to Margarete Buber-Neumann, the daughter-in-law of Martin Buber and friend of Milena Jesenská, beloved of Kafka (the two women had been inmates together at the Nazi death camp Ravensbrück). "So there we sat and talked," Chambers wrote in a letter to William F. Buckley Jr. "Then, we realized that, of our particular breed, the old activists, we are almost the only survivors." It is fitting that of all Chambers's English contemporaries it should have been Rebecca West, herself driven by ideological furies, who deemed *Witness* one of the great modern autobiographies, "so just and so massive in its resuscitation of the past."

WRITTEN IN the immediate aftermath of the Hiss case at the urging of Agee, *Witness* is indeed a towering memoir, but it is more urgently a spiritual manifesto, a call to moral arms. By the time he finished the book, Chambers had completed the arc of disenchantment—his last shreds of patience with the left destroyed by the Hiss case—and now stood defiantly on the right. Done with the socialist revolution, he was all for America, but he

betrayed himself in his prose, which, as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. noted in a review, exuded "an un-American ... or at least un-Anglo-Saxon intensity." This did not lessen its impact on postwar conservatism—among the movement's writers, but also among its political figures, keenly responsive as they were to Chambers's distillations of large ideas into quotable oratory and to his oddly sonorous invocations of the apocalypse.

World War II, Chambers wrote, "simplified the balance of forces in the world by reducing them to two." This was more or less what most Americans, including American intellectuals, believed in 1952. But Chambers typically went further, embracing a Manichaean dualism, though even this had its Marxist angle. As a practiced revolutionary, he knew—as did Lenin and Trotsky, for all their fealty to "historical materialism"—that political movements rise to power not on the wings of theory but through the politics of irreducible choice.

This was the lesson absorbed by American conservatives in their prolonged moment of ascendancy, which looks now to be ending. The movement's first national experiment with the politics of polarizing choice came in the presidential election of 1964, and the results were disastrous. But four years later Richard Nixon, who until Chambers's death remained his friend and in some sense his disciple, succeeded in shattering the postwar consensus by rallying a "silent majority" of God-fearing, law-abiding citizens to seize the whip from the unbelieving elite—the people who (in Nixon's view, not entirely wrong) had never forgiven him for exposing Hiss. Another master of divisiveness, Ronald Reagan, posthumously awarded Chambers the Medal of Freedom, and more than once startled aides by reciting passages of *Witness* from memory. The book's tonalities are likewise audible in the scripts that Reagan wrote for his popular radio addresses in the 1970s, when he was mounting his run at the presidency, and also in his notorious formulation "the evil empire," derived from Chambers's description of communism as "the focus of the concentrated evil of our time."

The epithet "evil empire" distressed many in the civilized world when Reagan first uttered it in 1983. But he was speaking in terms the Soviets themselves understood; he gave voice to the binary theology that joined the two great powers in their death struggle. In the 1980s, when Chambersian absolutism was very much in vogue, the official view of the Reagan White House was that the Soviet

Union was not only "permanently evil" but indestructible, growing in reach and in charismatic might even as the evidence oppositely pointed to a dysfunctional economy, a political spoils system rotten with corruption, republics seething with ethnic hatreds, satellite countries in rebellion. But when the collapse came, the Manichaean belief that America had singly "won" the cold war seemed vindicated. Our theology had triumphed. Even a conservative such as Fukuyama, updating the dialectic along Hegelian rather than Marxian lines, credited the triumph to "the realm of consciousness or ideas, since consciousness will ultimately remake the material world in its image." Since then Fukuyama has acknowledged that he and other neoconservatives were wrong.

Chambers, unburdened by intellectual discipline, also came to recognize the folly of the rigid dualism he had espoused so vividly. He was in fact among the first on the right to interpret the death of Stalin in 1953, and the subsequent rise of Khrushchev, as signaling a new phase in the "twilight struggle." In yet another of his volte-faces, the most unexpected of all, Chambers refashioned himself into a liberal in his last years. He became a defender of civil liberties (including Hiss's when he was denied a passport) and of the Keynesian policies promoted by John Kenneth Galbraith. He ardently opposed the arms race, which struck him as a dangerous provocation. Most interestingly, he came to see that the theology of Americanism was empty. Nations, in his evolving view, must scrub themselves before they sought to cleanse the souls of their enemies. "It is idle to talk about preventing the wreck of Western civilization," he wrote to Buckley in 1954. "It is already a wreck from within. That is why we can hope to do little more now than to snatch a fingernail of a saint from the rack or a handful of ashes from the fagots, and bury them secretly in a flower pot against the day, ages hence, when a few men begin again to dare to believe that there was once something else, that something else is thinkable ... that there were those who, at the great nightfall, took loving thought to preserve the tokens of hope and truth."

Meanwhile, the Manichaean Chambers remains a large presence on the right. In July 2001, the White House of George W. Bush, eager to polish its ideological credentials, paid homage to Chambers by holding an event in commemoration of his hundredth birthday.

The speakers included William F. Buckley Jr. and Robert Novak. The president did not attend, but two of his speechwriters, Michael Gerson and David Frum did, a fact that resonated some months later when, following Al Qaeda's attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, Gerson and Frum composed the phrase "axis of evil," which christened the new counter-jihad.

By then it was plain that "the war on terror" would be fought in the terms Chambers had spelled out in his bleakest phase, the lonely period following the Hiss case. His heirs had settled on an immovably absolutist course, inspired by the dark vision projected in *Witness*: "In this century, within the next decades, will be decided for generations whether all mankind is to become Communist, whether the whole world is to become free, or whether, in the struggle, civilization as we know it is to be completely destroyed or completely changed. It is our fate to live upon that turning point in history." Substitute "Islamofascist" for "Communist" and it is depressingly clear how little has changed.

THIS IS NOT to say that the lessons of the cold war are altogether inapplicable to the current struggle. Quite the opposite, and not only because we are now mired in a war that increasingly summons up all the worst memories of Vietnam. It is easy to overlook that Vietnam, horrific though the episode was, occurred within a broader global struggle in which the Western democracies ultimately prevailed. And it is equally easy to overlook, amid the catastrophe of Iraq, that the terrorist enemies we face are real—they are not figments, nor simply legions of the rightfully aggrieved, nor simply the victims (or the creations) of American overreach. To pretend they are, and to see the Bush administration as the sole author of our present troubles, is to become unwittingly complicit in the fanatical simplifications of those who mean to harm to us. It is to abandon "moral realism," as Trilling described it in his great book *The Liberal Imagination*. Trilling may not have ventured far into the communist movement, but he knew a good deal about the derangements of doctrinaire politics. Ideology, he wrote, "is not acquired by thought but by breathing the haunted air.... To live the life of ideology with its special form of unconsciousness is to expose oneself to the risk of becoming an agent of what Kant called 'the Radical Evil.'"

It is worth remembering, at this anxious moment, that the announced "war

on terror" began with the acknowledgment, long overdue in our politics, that radical evil really exists in the world, and that this acknowledgment was first made in language of surprising generosity. In his address to Congress on September 20, 2001, Bush—not yet the divisive figure he soon would become—spelled out our debt to other peoples: "Americans will never forget the sounds of our national anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris, and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate," Bush said. "We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America." To read these words today—words that if anything seem too hopeful in their assumptions about the Muslim world—is to be reminded that in the aftermath of 9/11 Bush gave us reason to believe he would draw on the most measured strains of cold war policy.

But this capacious internationalism was short-lived. It was replaced within a year by the suffocating unilateralism of the "Bush Doctrine" of "pre-emptive" license, with its promise, or threat, that henceforth the administration would "act, and act quickly, against danger," with

armed forces "ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world." In theory, this seemed reasonable: what great power can afford not to have a well-prepared military? The problem began with the "haunted air" that Bush and company inhaled. They seemed to revel in reviving the panicky mood of the late 1950s and early 1960s—only this time the low-grade emergency has given us red and yellow "alerts," reckless announcements of thwarted terrorist "plots," however inconsequential, the brutal mistreatment of "enemy combatants," the illegal surveillance of American citizens.

The result was that the actual dangers we faced from militant Islam were blurred into a generalized atmosphere of apocalyptic crisis. Essential distinctions, and the wisdom with which they were made, was lost. Yes, we are now in conflict with a grim adversary, but not with an opponent superpower, nor with anything resembling an empire, and it does no good to pretend otherwise. Not every good fight is a millennial fight. George W. Bush's worldview is precisely the one that Whittaker Chambers outgrew. It is a punishing irony, and one can imagine all too easily how Chambers himself would have greeted it: with the sly half-smile of a melancholy man who knows better. ♦

James Wood BLACK NOISE

FALLING MAN

By Don DeLillo

(Scribner, 246 pp., \$26)

DON DELILLO's new book is not a 9/11 novel but a 9/11 short story, or perhaps a 9/11 poem. It is not a synthesis or an argument or even, really, a sustained narrative, but an arrangement of symbolically productive elements—two towers and two paintings; people falling from the towers and a performance artist named "Falling Man" who re-enacts that fall; the artist named Falling Man and a main character who is also a man in free fall, or emotional collapse; Islamic terrorists and an art dealer who was once a German terrorist; old people losing their power of speech through Alzheimer's and a troubled little boy who refuses to speak in anything but monosyllables; a woman terrified of losing her memory and a man

trying to escape his. This highly formal, and quickly formalized, still life is sometimes affecting; more often it is mildly suggestive, with the reader feeling that a lot of white space on the page is glaring at him beseechingly.

The woman afraid of losing her memory is Lianne, painfully married to Keith Neudecker, the man who is trying to run from memory. Keith worked in the World Trade Center, and the novel opens with a description of the terrible day—the planes, the plague-like clouds of dust, the dazed survivors like whited sepulchers, the ash and paper: "contracts, resumé blowing by, intact snatches of business, quick in the wind." Keith staggers home, caked in white, and a marriage that had been broken—the two were separated—begins again, shakily. The book returns repeatedly to descriptions of that morning, perhaps in conscious imitation of the repeated, digitalized loop that television news forces on us, and partly, of course,

because the characters themselves cannot leave it alone. DeLillo is at his best in these passages, at once a keen imaginer and a cool analyst. Only a few days after the event, Keith and Lianne watch the news on television, and she sees again one of the planes roaring through the sky, and thinks that in a second

they would all be dead, passengers and crew, and thousands in the towers dead, and she felt it in her body, a deep pause, and thought there he is, unbelievably, in one of those towers, and now his hand on hers, in pale light, as though to console her for his dying.

He said, "It still looks like an accident, the first one. Even from this distance, way outside the thing, how many days later, I'm standing here thinking it's an accident."

"Because it has to be."

"It has to be," he said.

"The way the camera sort of shows surprise."

"But only the first one."

"Only the first," she said.

"The second plane, by the time the second plane appears," he said, "we're all a little older and wiser."

This novel attempts an evocation of what Lianne thinks of as this "deep pause"—not just the pause before the impact, but the pause after it, when everything changed, when time stopped.

The problem is that the novel itself falls into that "deep pause," too. It seems to drift in a stunned, meaningless void, where sentences—"These are the days after. Everything now is measured by after"—are given rather too much credence. When Keith goes back in his mind to that morning, it is the slow, oddly calm walk down the emergency staircase that he dwells on, a passage out of time when thousands made an orderly exit, when "he walked in a long sleep, one step and then the next." Days later, he visits a woman, Florence Givens, who was in the same building—he is returning her briefcase, which he was handed in the chaos—and they begin a relationship that has less to do with sex than with conversation and shared trauma; what they have in common is "the timeless drift of the long spiral down." The phrase nicely compacts the hellish escape downstairs, the collapse of the buildings themselves, and the way a life might "spiral down" after witnessing these incidents.

Keith's life is indeed spiraling. He had never been, perhaps, an easy husband—uncommunicative, driven, adulterous, tediously male. (He is one of those dull

men of few words and affectless action who throng the pages of American fiction, high and low. How one tires of these inert beings.) At the time of the terrorist event, Keith was living apart from his wife and nine-year-old son, in a bachelor pad not far from the World Trade Center. His unexpected return to Lianne—she can never rid her memory of the shock of seeing him at her doorstep, covered in dust—does not so much heal an old wound as simply add a new one to the old. The marriage must now accommodate Keith's incommunicable memories, his drifting trauma, the hours he spends at Florence Givens's apartment.

In addition, Lianne has her own torments. Her father committed suicide when she was nineteen, at the first sign of his senile dementia. Haunted by this and the potential menace of her own memory loss, she runs a kind of literary support group for elderly victims of Alzheimer's, people who are aware of their decline but still able to write down their experiences and impressions. Privately, she counts down from one hundred in increments of seven, to test her mental fitness. Her mother, Nina, a formidable New York art historian now given to hypochondria and a premature, willed senescence, is a difficult presence in her life. There is some obscure way in which Lianne, a freelance book editor, has not quite reached maternal expectations. Nina has an aging lover named Martin Widnour, a European art dealer who, it turns out, was a radical activist in Germany in the 1970s. How involved he was with terrorist groups like the Baader-Meinhof Gang is unknown, but he was criminal enough to have changed his real name, which was Ernst Hechinger. "Maybe he was a terrorist," Lianne catches herself thinking, "but he was one of ours ... and the thought chilled her, shamed her—one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white."

DEILLO CAN write exceptionally well, with exactitude and lyrical originality. The set scene descriptions of the morning of September 11, which open and close the novel, are fine examples of the kind of epic panning that opened *Underworld*. He can be aphoristic and funny, as his shorter novels, such as *White Noise* and *Mao II*, have shown. In DeLillo's new book, Keith is described at one point like this: "He used to come home late, looking shiny and a little crazy." That is somehow both exact and mysterious, in the right proportions. A doctor who treats Alzheimer's, Dr. Apter, is seen thus: "Apter was a slight man with

frizzed hair who seemed formulated to say funny things but never did." Lianne remembers the way her father would get red after sitting out in the sun, "appearing to buzz with electric current." A patient at the therapy group brings breakfast pastries, "large jellied bladders that no one else would touch." "Large jellied bladders" will be one of those images forthwith hard to dislodge. There are lots of sentences of this high quality.

But DeLillo is a very strange writer. For every elegant, compact sentence closing around its meaning as if delicately preying on it, there are passages that bear the other DeLillo mark, which could best be called a kind of fastidious vagueness. These are passages in which fancy words are deployed with a cool, technical confidence, in a spirit of precision, as if they have actual referents, but in which meaning is smeared and obscured. Consider this description of poker, a game that Keith had played every week with three other men, before "the day":

They played each hand in a glazed frenzy. All the action was somewhere behind the eyes, in naïve expectation and calculated deceit. Each man tried to entrap the other and fix limits to his own false dreams, the bond trader, the lawyer, the other lawyer, and these games were the funneled essence, the clear and intimate extract of their day-time initiatives. The cards skimmed across the green baize surface of the round table. They used intuition and cold-war risk analysis. They used cunning and blind luck. They waited for the prescient moment, the time to make the bet based on the card they knew was coming. *Felt the queen and there it was.* They tossed in the chips and watched the eyes across the table. They regressed to preliterate folkways, petitioning the dead. There were elements of healthy challenge and outright mockery. There were elements of one's intent to shred the other's gauzy manhood.

If I were given this passage in a blind test and asked for provenance, I would first murmur: "American, not English," for this could only be contemporary American prose, and then, more than likely, I would say: "Don DeLillo." What is most striking is the way the prose lifts itself up into a lyricism that is not quite lyrical: "glazed frenzy ... funneled essence ... preliterate folkways ... gauzy manhood" (whatever that is). The effect, very common in post-*White Noise* DeLillo, is an uneasy sense that the author is perhaps trying to be a bit funny, but not half as

funny as he is unwittingly being. The passage is unwittingly funny because it is so awfully earnest, in an adolescent writer's kind of way. The earnestness makes itself felt in the peculiar shifts into solemn pseudo-scientific registers: "They regressed to preliterate folkways, petitioning the dead." In other words, DeLillo means, the players muttered every so often: "Mother, help me!" It is no good to claim that this is free indirect style—DeLillo deliberately mimicking the earnestness of his poker players—because this is how DeLillo always sounds, and because there is no reason to assume that his poker players think like DeLillo. But what, except a kind of pomposity, is gained by the quasi-profound diction, with its bogus air of massive anthropological expertise? After all, this is just a poker game. And why "preliterate"? Preliteracy was a very, very long time ago: has no one called on the dead for the last literate four millennia?

DEILLO HAS A habit of letting his prose inflate itself when he scents a Big Question, at which point anything can happen. Yet there are times when a marvelous and sharp little phrase is still alive inside the layers of meaning. Toward the end of the novel, Lianne gets a brain scan, which determines that her "morphology is normal."

She had normal morphology. She loved that word. But what's inside the form and structure? This mind and soul, hers and everyone's, keep dreaming toward something unreachable. Does this mean there's something there, at the limits of matter and energy, a force responsible in some way for the very nature, the vibrancy of our lives from the mind out, the mind in little pigeon blinks that extend the plane of being, out beyond logic and intuition."

Lianne is having theological thoughts, and this passage is a query about whether there is such a thing as God. Most of it is DeLillo in full inflationary mode, and one can take or leave the windy stuff about "a force responsible in some way for the very nature, the vibrancy of our lives from the mind out ... the plane of being, out beyond logic and intuition." Carl Sagan writes better than this. But "the mind in little pigeon blinks that extend the plane of being" is oddly catching, and catches us because it is so

odd and unexpected. I suppose DeLillo means something like the neurological connections that light up the brain, or he may mean simply the way our eyes—and thus our brains—continually photograph and re-photograph the world, adjusting thousands of times a minute. Whatever he means, "little pigeon blinks" somehow captures the meaning: we can see the instantaneous re-adjusting of the bird's body and make the metaphorical leap.

DeLillo can be patient and precise at burrowing into troubled mental states. Some of the best passages in this book manage to convey a sense of Keith's blank, traumatized isolation, and Lianne's anxious post-disaster self-questioning, and the political and psychological tensions between Lianne's mother and Martin. (Martin thinks that America "had it coming," while his lover more atavistically defends her country against the Islamic threat.) He shows himself astute and delicate in a moment like this, for instance, as Lianne watches her domineering mother light a cigarette: "Her mother lit up. She watched, Lianne did, feeling something familiar and a little painful, how Nina at a certain point began to consider her invisible. The memory was located there, in the way she snapped shut the lighter and put it down, in the hand gesture and the drifting smoke."

And there is pleasure to be had from watching DeLillo assemble the symmetries and asymmetries of his artful construction. Nina, the art historian, has two beautiful still lifes by Morandi, gifts from Martin. (Highly implausible, unless Martin is a good deal richer than he seems to be.) Nina announces that these are what she will look at when there is nothing else to look at, when she is dying. In one of them, two tall dark columns remind everyone—in these charged days "after"—of the Twin Towers. These paintings, described several times by DeLillo, appear to be models for how *Falling Man* is itself organized. The book has a curiously static formation, exaggerated by DeLillo's habit of moving regularly from one character to another, from one episode to another, sometimes donating only a spare paragraph at a time to the subject at hand. In addition, the prose itself—sometimes effectively, sometimes pretentiously—often breaks into dangling aphorism: "She lived in the spirit of what is ever impending." (This sentence is, worse, its own one-

line paragraph.) The characters are also given DeLillo-like prose to speak, hard and cool and repetitive riffs. Here Keith meets an old poker-playing friend in a casino in Las Vegas:

"I go to the sports book to relax. Eat a sandwich and drink a beer. I like the action going on around me, all the screens, all the sports. I drink a beer and pretty much ignore it."

"I like to sit by the waterfall. I order a mild drink. Ten thousand people around me. In the aisles, in the aquarium, in the garden, at the slots. I sip a mild drink."

In this spirit of still life, of *natura morta* (the Italian phrase appeals to Lianne), the novel deploys patterns. There are the towers, which are "painted" by DeLillo at the start of the book. There are the two Morandi paintings, one of which reminds its viewers of the towers. There is Keith, who is the "Falling Man" of the novel's title. But there is also a performance artist, who calls himself "Falling Man," who is going around New York hanging from buildings and bridges, bizarrely re-enacting the visual memory of the people who threw themselves from the towers. There is too much memory (Keith) and too little memory (Lianne's anxiety about Alzheimer's). There is Islamic terrorism (Mohammed Atta) and "Western" terrorism (Martin). And three times—at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the book—there is a description of a shirt, which Keith remembers seeing blowing away from the towers and over the river on "the day."

THIS PAINTERLY assemblage has its satisfactions, but they are the kind that would work better in a short story, where pleasures can be had, precisely, from the pressurized, compact formality, and where such obviously "symbolic" patternings (for instance, the old people losing their memories counterposed with the memory-saturation of Keith) are more easily forgiven, as part of the price we pay for the poetic rhythm of short forms. The short story, in effect, announces: "Here, make of this installation what you will." Its very reticence—its brief four-thousandish-word span—is a lattice on which we can hang our interpretations. The novel, one feels, must do a little more than that—but *Falling Man* insists on retaining the reticent formality of a much shorter work, so that one feels it has been pumped with rarified air, and is just floating away on its own pretentiousness. For example, DeLillo



needs to have made something—as, say, Ian McEwan would have done—of Martin’s terrorist past; he might have productively opposed it to its more vicious Islamic version (if this is the case). Instead, nothing much is made of it beyond the fact of Martin’s “mysterious” history, and it seems only a wisp, an aesthetic balancing, another in DeLillo’s row of patterns, a mild dab of paint on one side of the canvas to match a violent slash of paint on the other. Likewise in the twinning of the two *Falling Men*, Keith and the performance artist. The symmetry seems mannered at best, unsubtle at worst; above all, unproductive of serious meaning or suggestion.

Paradoxically, despite the good writing that attends the set-piece descriptions of “the day,” *Falling Man* is most successful at the evocation of a shattered domestic existence, of life in the shadow of “after.” DeLillo is interested in the strategies that his people employ to soften the pain of this trauma, and he can be an acute examiner of such deliberate waywardness: Keith begins to spend more and more time in Las Vegas, that degree zero of America, where he can escape into the sweaty anomie of the professional poker player. Nina fixates on her still lifes, while Lianne starts going to church. The most sensitive touch concerns Keith and Lianne’s nine-year-old son Justin, who, along with his young friends, simply refuses to believe that the towers ever came down. The worried parents notice that the children are scanning the skies with a pair of binoculars. Why? Because, say the kids, “Bill Lawton” will come again, and this time, the towers will really fall. Who, they ask, is Bill Lawton? It is the name the children have been hearing on the news, and around the house. Subtly, DeLillo leaves open the question as to whether these children are haplessly or willfully ignorant. It is enough to know that they have their coping rituals, and the adults have theirs.

The 9/11 novel, if one must call it that, has been effective at depicting the impact of the trauma on ordinary lives: marriages repaired or broken by the event, projects and plans sundered, lives recalibrated, and the presence of a new, seeping anxiety. What it has been unable so far to achieve, as this novel and John Updike’s *Terrorist* prove, is anything like the examination of the psychological sources of resentment that Dostoevsky and Conrad produced. Updike’s eighteen-year-old Muslim firebrand was entirely incredible, nothing more than a scarecrow and scapegoat stuffed full of

obvious authorial research. In *Falling Man*, DeLillo devotes two brief, misbegotten sections to the 9/11 plotters: we see them assembling in Hamburg, and then later in Florida. The writing is a good deal better than Updike’s, but it lacks conviction, again because inquiry is not sustained but merely arranged. The chapters are so short that they lack the space to become serious; they seem dropped into the novel. The book, one

feels, should either have omitted the terrorists altogether or trained its gaze centrally on them, as DeLillo sustainably pictured the impotence and resentment of Lee Harvey Oswald in *Libra*. As it is done here, the fleeting imagining of radical evil seems shallow, and only adds to the general impression of a book that is all limbs—many articulations and joints, an artful map of connections, but finally no living, pulsing center. ♦

Alan Wolfe CONTEMPT

THE ESSENTIAL RUSSELL KIRK: SELECTED ESSAYS

Edited by George A. Panichas
(ISI Books, 640 pp., \$20)

I.
DUNCAN MacAskival is an iron magnate and “a self-made man, a good deal better than the average product of the big business-administration schools.” Nearing the end of his life, he has but one wish: to buy, lock, stock, and barrel, the island of Carnglass, one of the most remote of the Hebrides, so that he can die in his family’s ancestral homeland (and, by staying there only occasionally, avoid paying British taxes). On the island is a castle, the Old House of Fear, occupied by a distant member of his clan, Lady MacAskival. Go and buy it from her, Duncan instructs his lawyer, a fellow Scottish-American named Hugh Logan: “Even though she’s one of the richest old women in Britain, income tax and surtax won’t let her keep much more than five thousand pounds’ income.”

Somewhat dubiously, Logan sets off for Scotland. Carnglass, he discovers, is nearly impossible to reach; diligent and wily, he finds a way to row there in a dinghy, nearly losing his life in the process. Soon after landing he runs into an Irish ruffian who, mistaking Logan for a police inspector, tells him that the island is dominated by an evil genius, a certain Dr. Jackman, the doctorate granted by the University of Leningrad, or maybe Moscow. Jackman, it seems, is a communist who had been expelled from the party as “a premature deviationist,” and he has his eye on Lady MacAskival’s money to get himself reinstated with his former comrades. “And the party is all Jackman’s life, he being a political through and through,”

the Irishman tells Hugh. Although he does not carry a weapon, Logan learns, Jackman is a ruthless man who will stop at nothing to get what he wants; others, the people in his employ, do all the killing for him.

Hugh Logan eventually reaches the castle and is greeted by a beautiful young woman, Mary MacAskival, with whom he soon falls in love. Mary tells him that Dr. Jackman is a hypnotist as well as a communist, and that he has obtained control over the dying Lady MacAskival by persuading her that only he can prevent the ghost of her former husband from returning to haunt her. Logan knows that if he is to buy the castle, he will have to deal with Jackman, but Jackman at first befriends Logan and, over a chess match, offers him a lecture in defense of Lysenko, the crackpot scientist much beloved by Stalin. Later, Mary fills Hugh in on Jackman’s political career. Fighting in the Spanish Civil War, he most likely poisoned a number of hospital patients. Then he was sent to various Eastern European countries, where he became a terrorist, thereby losing favor with the party. On Carnglass, Jackman had spent much time trying to recruit Mary to the cause; getting nowhere, he then, and equally without success, instructed her in the mysteries of the occult. Not for Mary the “systemic and humorless” minds of Jackman and his fellow apparatchik Mr. Royall, who, “wholly devoted to Jackman ... was forever talking of the sufferings of the working classes,” even if he also referred to ordinary people as “the scum.”

Reflecting on what Mary told him, Hugh realizes that Jackman and his henchmen “might have commenced, like others, full of humanitarian sentimentality. And then, perhaps, demon ideology, with its imperatives and its

inexorable dogmas, its sobersided caricature of religion, had swept them on to horrors." Not to be deterred by Jackman's penchant for evil, however, Hugh and Mary, after many chases and close calls, find a way to confront the monster and are then free to marry, although we never learn whether Hugh was actually able to buy the castle for his boss back in the United States.

THIS IS THE STORY told in *Old House of Fear*, Russell Kirk's most successful book, which was published in 1961; it has sold more copies than all his other books combined. There are those who do not find it as dreary as I did. John J. Miller, a writer for *National Review*, compared Kirk's book to the writings of Edgar Allan Poe. The science fiction writer Ray Bradbury, who hated the fact that Michael Moore used a knock-off of *Fahrenheit 451* as the title of his anti-Bush movie, greatly admired Kirk's ghost stories. Even T.S. Eliot got into the act. "How amazing and prolific you are!" he wrote to Kirk in 1958. "Now you have written what I least expected of you—ghost stories." It seems that Kirk, had he wished, could have devoted his life to writing fantasy. "Mine was not an Enlightened mind," Kirk wrote in 1963. "It was a Gothic mind, medieval in its temper and structure."

If popular readers know Kirk as a fiction writer, intellectuals know him as a conservative political philosopher, and a reputedly important one. With Kirk, observed George H. Nash in *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, "the new conservative or traditionalist segment of the nascent American right reached full bloom." Conservatism and Kirk seem to have been made for each other. A product of the heartland—Kirk was born in 1918 in Michigan, in a town appropriately named Plymouth, founded by New Englanders who had flocked there during the Second Great Awakening—Kirk grew up in simpler times and accepted the verities of his era enthusiastically: not for him any dramatic shift from left to right. Largely self-taught, he opted not to pursue a regular academic career, preferring the role of the independent man of letters. Celibate until his late forties, he was something of a hermit, preferring to live in the town of Mecosta in northwest Michigan, population today less than five hundred. (He died in 1994.) If being conservative means resisting the temptations of modernity, it would be difficult to find a more traditional person than Russell Kirk.

Kirk's decision to write both Gothic fiction and political philosophy tells you something about modern conservatism. For one thing, he was not alone; conservatives from J. R. R. Tolkien to Ayn Rand were also attracted to fantasy, and, in more recent times, two stalwarts of the Bush administration—Lynne Cheney and I. Lewis Libby—have written historical romances. (Should Newt Gingrich find himself in the White House, God forbid, we would have a fantasy-fiction writer as president.) Fantasy fiction gave Kirk the room to roam, to portray the world as an eternal struggle between good and evil in which the former's cause is not lost so long as it is faithful to everything that makes it good. Magical places such as the Outer Hebrides convey some eternal truths about the human condition that have been lost in the rush to modernity. "There were fairies in the last generation," Kirk wrote in a memoir of a trip to the Hebrides.

A world in which people read fairy tales and take them seriously is a better world than the one in which we live. "One has but to look at our half-ruined American cities, with their ghastly rates of murder and rape, to perceive that we moderns lack the moral imagination and the right reason required to maintain tolerable community," Kirk wrote toward the end of his life. "Perhaps Tolkien's blasted and servile land of Mordor may serve as a symbol of the human condition in the twenty-first century." Kirk would no doubt be pleased to see children these days rushing out to see *Lord of the Rings*: "The fantastic and the fey, far from being unhealthy for small children, are precisely what a healthy child needs; under such stimulus, a child's moral imagination quickens." Searching for a good example, Kirk came up with *Little Black Sambo*.

II.

THE FIRST QUESTION to be asked about Russell Kirk is why he needed fiction. His explicitly political writings are just as fantastic as *Old House of Fear*. And his fiction is as didactic as anything he writes about Plato or Coleridge.

Consider Hugh Logan's thoughts about "demon ideology." As improbable as it may be to find a Stalinist in the Outer Hebrides, Dr. Jackman's role in *Old House of Fear* is not to advance the story, but to give Kirk the opportunity to pronounce on ideology's dangers. This is also something he frequently does in his political essays. "Ideology" does not mean political theory or political prin-

ciple," he wrote in one of them, "even though many journalists and some professors commonly employ the term in that sense. Ideology really means political fanaticism." I can certainly go along with that. Kirk was not the only modern thinker to warn of ideology; in fact, the great warnings were the work of modern liberals. There is something like a fanatic imagination. When it grabs hold of politics, sectarianism, and sometimes violence, follows.

For Kirk, however, it is not fanaticism in general that gives cause for worry, but one kind of fanaticism in particular: "the belief that this world of ours may be converted into the Terrestrial Paradise through the operation of positive law and positive planning." By this definition, Jeremy Bentham—Kirk's least favorite philosopher—was an ideologue, but Edmund Burke—his most favorite one—was not. Reading Kirk, it would seem that there are only left-wing ideologues, and the term "conservative ideology" is an oxymoron that can make sense "only if, with Humpty Dumpty, we claim the prerogative of forcing words to mean whatever we desire them to signify."

Kirk admits of two possible exceptions to his insistence that ideology is a monopoly of the left, although each of them is cited to confirm his point. Nazism, too, is an ideology—but we should not forget that the Nazis, like all ideologues, held "that human nature and society may be perfected by mundane, secular means." Of all the crimes committed by the Nazis, the proclivity for human perfectibility is an odd one to choose; but it is Kirk's choice. And then there is the "objectivist" ideology of Ayn Rand and her followers, for whom Kirk expresses deep contempt. Yet Rand, in Kirk's view, is more a libertarian than a conservative, and libertarians take their inspiration from that quintessential liberal John Stuart Mill. Libertarians therefore have nothing in common with conservatives (a point once made, in reverse, by F. A. Hayek in a famous essay called "Why I Am Not a Conservative"). "The representative libertarian of this decade," Kirk wrote in an essay published in 1981, is, much like Dr. Jackman, "humorless, intolerant, self-righteous, badly schooled, and dull." Libertarians are "mad—metaphysically mad.... I do not mean that they are dangerous; they are repellent merely, like certain unfortunate inmates of 'mental homes.'" You will not find many devotees of Russell Kirk at the Cato Institute.

It seems odd for Kirk to vent his spleen against libertarians, since, to him, ideologues believe in "positive planning,"

which is the one thing that libertarians detest. But liberals and libertarians do share a trait, and for Kirk it is the definitive one: they both substitute secular reasoning for the divine laws of God. Ideology, you see, is religion turned inside out. "Ideology provides sham religion and sham philosophy, comforting in its way to those who have lost or never have known genuine religious faith, and to those not sufficiently intelligent to apprehend real philosophy" (Mill once called conservatives the stupid party. Kirk is merely returning the compliment.) This is why conservatives can never be ideologues; possessing faith, and deeply versed in philosophy, they have no need of any replacements. "Because ideology is by essence antireligious," Kirk once wrote, "Christians tend to be attracted to ideology's negation, conservatism."

The opposite of an ideological mind, for Kirk, is a prudential one, and conservatives by their very nature are prudential in a way that liberals can never be. Liberals believe in abstract principles, conservatives believe in the lessons of experience. Liberals are extremist, conservatives are moderate. Liberals are universalists, conservatives are particularists. Liberals insist on perfectibility, conservatives insist on the limits of human nature. Unfortunately for conservatives, we live in an age of ideology. Fortunately for them, the United States is not an ideological land. Conservatives should go about their business firmly, but also quietly and cautiously: "Conservatism not being an ideology with pretensions to universality and infallibility, there can be no Capitalist Manifesto to set against the Communist Manifesto."

Kirk is right to cite Lewis Carroll's dictum that words can mean anything we want them to mean, and if he wants to solve all the complexities of ideology in the modern world by defining the

problem away, that is his business. The problem is that from such a rigging of the terms no serious political philosophy can follow. Industrial capitalism destroyed "old-style conservatism," he says at one point, but one does not find Kirk railing against dark Satanic mills. (After all, Duncan MacAskill owned one.) Conservatives cannot write manifestos, but Barry Goldwater wrote one and Milton Friedman wrote another. (Kirk would likely dismiss Friedman as a libertarian, but Goldwater he would have to accept.) Conservatives believe "social institutions always must differ considerably from nation to nation," but these days that belief is held by anthropologists and multiculturalists, neither of whom are known for their conservatism. Conservatives are pragmatic, but, Kirk hastens to add, they are not pragmatists. (Dewey occupies second place among Kirk's philosophers of horror.) The conservative does not believe in abstractions, but he does believe that the Constitution should be interpreted narrowly rather than broadly. It should be plain that when Russell Kirk writes, contradiction flies off the page. But how can this be surprising? Since ideology can be found on both sides of the political spectrum, to locate it on only one side means that reality will have to conform to a priori assertions, to dogmatic definitions.

Liberalism contains a feature identified by the political philosopher Mark Hulliung as "auto-critique." Rousseau's debt to liberalism, Hulliung believes, was to criticize the Enlightenment in the spirit of the Enlightenment, thus starting a tradition in which those committed to open inquiry would also inquire openly about themselves. Kirk, of course, will have nothing to do with Rousseau; he shares Burke's dismissal of him as "the insane secretary of the National Assembly." But Kirk is just as immune from criticizing conservatism in the name of conservatism. For if conservatism is all but synonymous with religion, then criticism becomes heresy. Besides, conservatism does not need criticism from within; its truths are both timeless and tested by experience, and therefore in no need of logic-chopping by narrow-minded academics.

Nor are public intellectuals anything but academic logic-choppers, or of much use. At the time Kirk was writing, American intellectual life was dominated by

Partisan Review, and one of the many remarkable features of that enterprise was that the writers for that magazine spent more time criticizing the liberalism they shared than the conservatism they opposed. "I do not like to see the American scholar and bookman and intelligent man of action forced into the mold cast, say, by *Partisan Review*," was Kirk's response. His ideal is not the intellectual—intellectuals are inevitably seduced by ideology. His ideal is the gentleman scholar, who understands the eternal verities and can express them in elevated and edifying language.

III.

KIRK DEVOTED his life to praising what he called "the permanent things," those pillars of order put in place by people who lived long before us to which we, if we know what is best for us, will pay homage. Two such pillars—religion and the Constitution—play an especially prominent role in his writing. When he addresses them, Kirk, unable to escape from the dungeon of ideology in which he confined himself, can offer only cliché dressed up as conviction.

As one who sides with order over license, Kirk, not unexpectedly, views religion as the foundation of the former. "Until human beings are tied together by some common faith, and share certain moral principles, they prey upon one another," he wrote. Civilization without religion is therefore impossible. We should pay more attention to the "venerable theory" that "history is the record of human existence under God, meaningful only so far as it reflects and explains and illustrates the order in the soul and in society which emanates from divine purpose." It is true that good religion puts the fear of God into people, but—lover of the ghostly that he is—Kirk sees this as faith's great advantage: "Without a knowledge of fear, we cannot know order in personality or in society. Fear forms an ineluctable part of the human condition. To demand for mankind 'freedom from fear,' as politically attainable, was a silly piece of demagogic sophistry." But alas, "the God-fearing man is sufficiently rare among us." We have become too modern to be too religious. "Faith no longer works wonders among us: one has but to glance at the typical church built nowadays, ugly and shoddy, to discern how architecture no longer is nurtured by the religious imagination." Great civilizations before us have ended in "slime," and perhaps ours will as well.

Everything that Kirk says about religion and the social order is breathtaking

Storm

The storm had golden hair flecked with black and moaned in a monotone, like a simple woman giving birth to a future soldier, or a tyrant.

Vast clouds, multi-storied ships surrounded us, and lightning's scarlet strands scattered nervously.

The highway became the Red Sea.
We moved through the storm like a sheer valley.
You drove; I looked at you with love.

ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI

Translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh

ingly unoriginal, except for the remark that without religion we would be in a constant state of war. Given the fact that so many wars have been fought over religion, there is no disputing the creativity of that observation. To his credit, Kirk seems to realize his lack of originality, since he so frequently cites other thinkers who make the same points. Leo Strauss is not one of them: he makes only one appearance in the essays collected in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, and it is a marginal one. Kirk's favorite contemporary political philosopher is Eric Voegelin, another German-born thinker who made his mark in America. If you think Strauss is too conservative, try Voegelin. A refugee from Nazi Germany, Voegelin, according to Kirk, understood that the absence of God leads directly to genocide. "In our time," Voegelin wrote in a passage that Kirk cites approvingly, "we can observe ... that people are shocked by the horrors of war and by Nazi atrocities but are unable to see that these horrors are no more than a translation, to the physical level, of the spiritual and intellectual horrors which characterize progressive civilization in its most 'peaceful' phase." This, too, is anything but a startlingly new insight: Heidegger said the same thing from the right and Adorno and Horkheimer said it from the left. It is about as true as the idea that Nazism's biggest crime was social planning.

ANYONE WHO believes that religion is essential to social order needs to answer the question of which religion it should be, since the truths taught by one are rarely the same as those taught by others. Perhaps Judaism is a good conservative answer, since it offers respect for law, and surely law is an important bulwark of order. But when it comes to Judaism, Kirk has some exceedingly odd ideas. Without the legacy of ancient Israel, he wrote in a book published in 1974, "the American moral order could not have come into existence at all." But we should not conclude from Kirk's comment that he believes Judaism to have made an important contribution to American life. Quite the contrary: following Voegelin, Kirk believes that Judaism's role in history was simply to prepare the way for Christianity. The idea of a Chosen People, Kirk writes, was a necessary prelude to a time in which "God becomes known successively as Creator, as Lord and Judge of history, and as Redeemer." In this role the Jews were not alone; Platonism is another ancient religion that anticipated the coming of Jesus. "Neither the leap of Israel nor the leap of

Hellas brought full knowledge of the transcendent order; it required the fusing of Jewish and Greek genius in Christianity for a leap still higher." (And for all his appreciation of ancient Israel, Kirk did not like the Israel of today, Zionism having been in his day a left-wing, and therefore an ideological, cause.)

Now that we have a religion that is "higher" than Judaism—and, for that matter, Hellenism—surely we ought to be able to turn to Christianity as the source of the permanent things. But which Christianity? The religion of Jesus comes in a profusion of forms. Roman Catholicism seems an obvious candidate, since, of all Christianity's varieties, it has thought longest and hardest about the relationship between God's world and our own; but Kirk cannot find the answer there because, for him, Catholicism is not a conservative religion. True, the popes of the nineteenth century were wont to denounce liberalism, so this may sound like an odd position for Kirk to take, but it follows directly from his thoughts about ideology. Recall his argument that conservatives believe in neither universality nor infallibility, and note that the Vatican believes in both. Indeed, Catholicism fits just about every characteristic that Kirk characterizes as ideological: its taste for manifestos can be seen in its encyclicals; its attraction to abstraction can be found in the vigorous style of argumentation that they contain; and in its sympathy for social justice, the Church is not at all against "positive planning." (European welfare states were as much the product of Catholic political parties as they were of socialist ones.) Kirk, not one to be bothered by contradiction, admires Catholicism nonetheless, but the two major Catholic figures he discusses were both converts—Orestes Brownson from Protestantism and Max Picard from Judaism—and neither is a major figure in the history of Catholic theology.

Perhaps, then, Kirk's best bet would be evangelical Protestantism. This form of Christianity has grown by leaps and bounds, and it claims to speak on behalf of a moral majority. Evangelicalism, however, is too tacky for Kirk's taste. Those bland churches that he denounces are most likely evangelical ones. And no matter how old-fashioned its message, evangelicalism, committed to spreading the Word, is strikingly modern in its use of technology, therapy, and music, and none of that would satisfy Kirk's preference for the Gothic. Even evangelicalism's most pronounced

feature—its insistence on the literal truth of the Bible—is not something that Kirk can accept. To him, such a way of practicing religion is no more credible than "some self-proclaimed mystic from the gorgeous East, whose teachings are patently absurd." Kirk is too much the romantic to be a literalist: "To maintain that all normative truth may be found in the Bible, or in any other sacred book, is to fall into the error of what Coleridge called 'bibliolatry'."

One final example of faith that fails to serve Kirk's purposes is the notion of a "civil religion," a term originally coined by "well-meaning folk" to call attention to the tendency of Americans to make something sacred out of the special providence of their country. "Such experiments of a secular character never have functioned satisfactorily," Kirk dourly points out. Mimicking Voegelin, Kirk jumps, without pause, from Robert Bellah to Adolf Hitler: "It is scarcely necessary for me to point out the perils of such an artificial creed, bound up with nationalism: the example of the ideology of the National Socialist Party in Germany, half a century ago, may suffice." If fascism can be found in an idea as harmless as that of civil religion, surely it can be found anywhere.

With four religions unable to be called upon to gird the social order, one might think that Kirk's next step would be to identify the one that, to him, is best suited for the task. But this Kirk never does. He defends religion, but not any particular religion. One looks in vain for apologetics in Kirk's work, for some serious theological demonstration that the ideas associated with a particular tradition, because they are true, are the best ideas for holding society together. Lacking any such thing, Kirk's call for a "sacred patrimony" amounts to little more than Dwight Eisenhower's injunction on the importance of believing in something, whatever that something happens to be. It is really an uplifting form of philosophical indifference.

Ironically, therefore, Kirk winds up in the very camp of the civil religion that he has denounced. For if our moral order is to be undergirded not by any one faith, but by a generic form of Christianity, it will be an "artificial creed," lacking historical and theological specificity. At the same time, it will not be able to carry out the tasks that Kirk assigns it. How are you going to fear God if you do not know which God to fear? "We who think that life remains worth living ought to address ourselves to means by which

a restoration of our culture may be achieved," Kirk concluded. "A prime necessity for us is to restore an apprehension of religious insights in our clumsy apparatus of public instruction, which—bullied by militant secular humanists and presumptuous federal courts—has been left with only ruinous answers to the ultimate questions." Against this vapid, give me Father Neuhaus anytime: when he defends the need for religion in the public square, you are not left in doubt about which religion it is.

Everything wrong with Kirk's conservatism can be found in his treatment of religion. When the moment comes that trite animadversions will no longer suffice and he must deal with an actual intellectual problem, Kirk runs away. The result is a denunciation of everything that we modern people do without any convincing account of how anything could be done differently. One knows this immediately, because as soon as Kirk arrives at his conundrum he does what all conservatives do when they find themselves in an impossible situation: he quotes Yeats's "The Second Coming," the most abused poem in the English language. However passionate everyone else may be and however blood-dimmed the world has become, Kirk assures his fellow conservatives, he is one of the best, full of conviction, holding to a center that everyone else has abandoned.

IV.

RELIGION, REMEMBER, is not Kirk's only source of permanent things. There is also the American Constitution. The men who wrote that esteemed document, Kirk believes, were "pillars of order." Not only were they conservative, they were also men of faith. "With only three or four exceptions, they were Christians of one profession or another: that is, they took their primary assumptions about the human condition, consciously or unconsciously, from the Bible and (many of them) from the Book of Common Prayer." They were natural aristocrats—gentlemen, not philosophers. That is why they succeeded. "Their aristocratic realism made possible the survival of American democracy." Not for Kirk any of Louis Hartz's insistence on the importance of Lockean liberalism in the founding of the United States. Kirk's views on the Framers are oddly closer to those of Charles Beard, although Beard denounces the upper-class backgrounds of the Framers while Kirk celebrates them.

One would think that, given his views on religion, Kirk would be more likely to attack the Framers than to adulate them.

After all, Article VI of the hallowed document forbade religious tests for office, and its very first amendment separated church and state. If American decadence can be blamed on the absence of a common faith, surely its decline began in Philadelphia. And then there is the matter of one of the American presidents signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1797, which stated that "As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen; and, as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions, shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

Kirk's hero Burke insisted that order required an established church. Everything we know about Kirk suggests that he would agree. And yet he does not agree. The problem is that Kirk could not promote the need for an established religion without admitting that the Framers were wrong, and you do not say of the permanent things that they were established on the basis of false claims. Here, then, is another of those conundrums that requires some serious thinking, and here again Kirk flees the field. He deals with the Treaty of Tripoli easily: he simply assigns it to Thomas Jefferson, the one founder he can dismiss as a Rousseauian. Never mind, I suppose, that the treaty was actually signed by John Adams, one of the conservatives Kirk otherwise admires.

And then he engages in reasoning so torturous that it can only be called, well, ideological. True, he acknowledges, the Framers did not spend much time debating theology when they wrote the Constitution, but "this does not signify that the delegates aspired to establish some civil religion as an alternative to Judaism and Christianity." Besides, their failure to assign an important role for faith in their country's founding text means "simply that their constitution was to be a practical instrument of government, not a work of politico-religious dogma." This is dishonest thinking at its most repellent. First Kirk moves the goalposts by arguing that the Framers must have been religious because they were not irreligious; and then, despite having praised the Framers as engaged in securing "an enduring social order," he turns around and characterizes their accomplishment as mere political tinkering. This

is a thinker for whom concepts such as irony or paradox do not exist.

THE aristocratic gentleman whom Kirk most admired lived a generation after the Framers. He was John Randolph of Roanoke, born in 1773 and died in 1833, a representative and then a senator from Virginia. A farmer, Randolph defended the agricultural way of life, which means that he defended a conservative way of life. Kirk's description of him is as romantic as anything in his Gothic tales: "He lived like a pre-Revolutionary Virginia gentleman, bumping over the wretched roads in his old-fashioned English coach, and his slaves rode blooded horses; but he inhabited a simple cabin and spent the greater part of each year in the oppressive routines of growing tobacco and grains." Randolph spoke on behalf of the old ways: a natural governing class, a suspicion toward federal power, a strict constitution, the planter way of life. All of it was doomed once industrialism and westward expansion became staples of American life, but Randolph's ideas, and those of the social class for whom he spoke, ought to be admired nonetheless: "They asked only to be left unmolested, allowed to buy and sell in a free market, not to be taxed for the benefit of other interests, not to be forced into another mode of life."

It all sounds so pure and Thoreauvian—until one remembers that the things Randolph wanted to buy and sell included those slaves whose horses were pulling his fine coach, and that the mode of life that he was fighting to retain was one that denied the fundamental equality of all human beings. Kirk's few references to slavery are as tortured as every other point of difficulty in the simple-minded ghost story he calls history. One finds no mention at all of the infamous three-fifths clause in the excerpt in this book dealing with those natural aristocrats who wrote the Constitution. And when Kirk does discuss the South's peculiar institution, he is as apologetic as George Fitzhugh or Samuel Seabury. One reason the Old Republicans failed, he wrote, is "because they could not rid themselves of the burden of negro slavery." In Kirk's upside-down universe, virtuous men such as John Randolph of Roanoke were doing everything in their power to end slavery, but forces beyond their control made it impossible. One can appreciate why Kirk is led to such a fictitious romanticism. Any acknowledgment that slavery existed because it was profitable for the planter class would all but eliminate the planter class as a moral

ideal that Americans ought to emulate.

It gets worse. Kirk admires John C. Calhoun, whom he calls a disciple of Burke, because Calhoun defended the conservative idea of an organic constitution. In reality, however, Calhoun was willing to tear up the Constitution written in Philadelphia if the defense of slavery required it. "It is for us who see and feel it to do what the Framers of the Constitution would have done had they possessed the knowledge in this respect which experience has given to us, that is, provide against the dangers which the system has practically developed; and which, had they been foreseen at the time and left without guard, would undoubtedly have prevented the States, forming the southern section of the Confederacy, from ever agreeing to the Constitution," Calhoun wrote in his *Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States*. This is what we might call judicial activism run wild. It is certainly not an eternal conservatism. Make an agreement one year, see how it works over time, and if you do not like the outcomes, go back and change it: this was Calhoun's approach to the permanent things. Calhoun was a Southern nationalist, not a conservative, and he was willing to jettison the one to protect the other. I am referring to the actual John C. Calhoun.

Liberals have no problem talking about slavery. Believers in human rights, they view slavery as the institution most destructive of those rights ever invented by the mind of man. But not Kirk. "On no point of political theory in America does greater confusion exist than upon this question of 'human rights' as set against the need for restraints upon will and appetite," he remarks. All that confusion could be eliminated if we simply understood that when the existence of the social order is at stake, human rights have to give way. But there is nothing at all confusing about believing that however much restraint society requires, no restraint that shackles human beings in chains and renders their lives dependent upon a master who owns them can be morally justified.

The confusion on this point lies all on Kirk's side. "The conservative impulse is a man's desire to walk in the paths that his father followed; it is a woman's desire for the sureties of hearth and home," he says at one point. Any writer serious about political philosophy who believed this would move immediately to the

harder question: what if the father's path is a path to evil, or the sureties of hearth and home are degrading to most of those who live there? Conservatism cannot simply be a defense of everything that exists. Edmund Burke, who supported the American Revolution and denounced the French one, never did that. Yet his disciple Russell Kirk is unable to distinguish between restraints that violate the most basic attributes of human decency and those that do not.

V.

RUSSELL KIRK does not anthologize well. By bringing excerpts from his books and articles together in one place, George A. Panichas has inadvertently demonstrated Kirk's gross limitations as a political thinker. There are the citations of the same authors over and over, the same ideas repeated again and again, the interminable name-dropping, even the same *bon mots* when Kirk is particularly pleased with himself. Kirk was prolific without being profound. Despite the thirty or so books he wrote, his range was remarkably narrow. True, he wrote both fiction and non-fiction, but everything he wrote in all the genres was the same homily, all devoted to making the same few points over and over again. There just are not that many interesting ways to defend lost causes, especially when they are bad ones.

For repeating himself, Kirk can be forgiven; many thinkers and writers repeat themselves. But the repetitiveness here begins to look like a human shortcoming. The real problem with *The Essential Russell Kirk* is that it leaves you with a vivid sense of the man's smallness as a person. "When I was seven," Kirk writes boastfully about his childhood, "my mother gave me a set of James Fennimore Cooper's novels; and about the same time I inherited from a great-uncle my set of Hawthorne. That launched me upon novel-reading, so that by the time I was ten I had read all of Hugo, Dickens, and Twain." He wishes to be regarded as a prodigy, which is in keeping with his vanity as a writer. And his larger point, the admonition that he extracts from his own precociousness, is that if children are not introduced to great literature at a young age, they "will find the nearest and newest Grub Street pornographers."

Yet in spite of being raised on so much Hawthorne and Dickens, Kirk finds pornography everywhere. Here he is recount-

ing one such discovery: "The other night I lodged into a fashionable new hotel; my single room cost about eighty dollars. One could tune the room's television set to certain movies, for an extra five dollars. After ten o'clock, all the films offered were nastily pornographic." This is less believable than the claim to have read *Dombey and Son* before puberty. You would have to go to a very special hotel indeed to find only pornography for your viewing pleasure. And to know just how nasty the movies in his hotel were, he would have had to watch them just a bit. So Kirk all but tells us something about his late-night taste in film. And what does he do when he suddenly realizes what he has revealed? He quotes Yeats.

George W. Bush once called himself a compassionate conservative. Russell Kirk is a contemptuous conservative. Kirk is contemptuous of people, or at least those whose very existence prevents gentlemen aristocrats from sitting in front of the fire reading Aristotle while their slaves, or their wives, prepared their dinner. He is contemptuous of ideas, or of those ideas with which he disagrees, and prefers caricaturing them to arguing with them. He is contemptuous of the world in which he lived, always exaggerating the bad and having nary a word to say about the good. He is contemptuous of the truth, mangling his facts and distorting the history of the country he claims to love. His is not the conservatism of the country club; Kirk is no northeastern aristocrat determined to protect the exclusivity of his turf. His is the conservatism of George Babbitt, not Irving Babbitt: provincial, resentful, bigoted. If you collected all the grumblings in a small-town drugstore by men convinced that somehow the world had passed them by, and then added a few literary and historical references, you would have *The Essential Russell Kirk*.

One final example of vintage Kirk says it all: "Lionel Trilling, more than thirty years ago, found the liberal imagination nearly bankrupt." Oh, really? What Trilling actually wrote was that "liberalism is not only the dominant but the sole intellectual tradition" in the United States. Trilling's campaign to fortify the liberal imagination must not be mistaken for a repudiation of its existence, a mistake that Kirk, whose every word reflects the biases of his ideology, readily makes. And it was the conservative imagination that Trilling found bankrupt. It expressed itself, he declared, not in ideas, but in "irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." A better description of Russell Kirk and his view of the world could not have been written. ♦



My Servant Problem

IN THE FOUR years that I lived in India with my wife and two children, friends back home were always asking about the servants. How many did we have? (Five, not counting part-timers.) What did they do? (Just about everything.) Did I miss doing the laundry? (Are you kidding?) I understood the interest—and the envy. Like most Americans who do not run hedge funds, my wife and I weren't used to such pampering; when living in our Maryland suburb, we had considered ourselves lucky that we could afford a cleaning service twice a month. But servants go with the territory in India. With a touch of guilt, we were determined to enjoy the good life while it lasted.

IF ONLY IT HAD been that simple. The staff of our rented bungalow in New Delhi was typical of our neighborhood, a shaded enclave popular with diplomats and foreign businessmen. We had a maid and a cook, of course, as well as a driver and a rotating cast of *chowkidars* to sit outside the front gate and protect us from marauding basket salesmen. The head *chowkidar*, Ashok, doubled as our Man Friday. Need an item from the drug store, or perhaps a railway ticket purchased in advance from Delhi's teeming station? Press a buzzer and he would magically appear to receive his marching orders. We also employed several part-timers, including a *mali* to tend the small garden and a *dhobi* who came in twice a week to do the laundry. There was even a guy whose main duties consisted of exercising the dog and, every afternoon, running a squeegee over the marble surface of our driveway.

YOU CAN GET USED TO this kind of thing. For four years, I rarely washed a dish or made a bed, and I can't say I pined for either task. In our own defense, there was a case to be made that servants were something of a necessity for an American family trying to maintain a semblance of normal life in India. In the absence of Western-style supermarkets, for example, shopping for groceries re-

sembled nothing so much as a treasure hunt, with the prizes scattered among tiny stalls in a vast covered bazaar. This could take hours and was not as quaint as it sounds. On one of her first attempts, my wife, Gail, was dismayed to find the butcher wielding his cleaver while squatting, barefoot, on a fly-covered chopping block. After that experience, we were happy to delegate the shopping to our cook, Joseph, not only because it saved us time but also because, as a Christian, he knew where to find good beef (a challenge in mostly Hindu India, where cows are considered holy and protected from slaughter in most states).

THE SERVANT WE counted on most was Ashok, whose designated role as *chowkidar* didn't begin to describe the central place he occupied in our lives. A gentle, eternally pleasant soul in his late thirties, Ashok was married to Asha, the maid, with whom he had a young son. The family lived in a small apartment over the garage. Among his many other duties, Ashok paid the utility bills, a simple enough task back home but one that in India required a trip to each utility company—and a lengthy wait in line—to hand over the money in person. He also helped preserve our sanity by supervising the ceaseless parade of non-English-speaking repairmen who trooped through the house to fix its chronically malfunctioning plumbing and wiring.

BUT ALL THIS coddling came at a cost. For some weeks after our arrival, Asha would frequently barge into bedrooms and bathrooms, sometimes at awkward moments, and often looked more perplexed than embarrassed when we gently shooed her out. It took us a while to understand that, in a country with three times the population of the United States in one-third the space, people simply had a different attitude toward privacy than we did. Gail finally dealt with Asha's intrusions by making a DO NOT DISTURB sign for our bedroom and coaching her in the finer points of knocking. After that, we had the opposite problem. So literally did Asha

take her instructions that, even if she could see that we were nowhere near the room she wanted to dust or supply with fresh linens, she would ostentatiously hammer on the door and wait for several seconds before going in.

CALL ME UNGRATEFUL, but servility rubbed me the wrong way. I just couldn't get used to the idea of being the *sahib*, to the bowing and scraping it inspired on the part of the grown men and women who worked for me. The night *chowkidar* made me feel like an idiot every time he greeted me with a snappy salute and a brisk, "Suh!" (Was I supposed to salute back?) And I hated the way that Asha, in a pantomime of humility, would flatten herself against a wall every time I came within sight, even if I was on the other side of the room. My father, visiting from the United States, was sometimes perplexed to find, after returning from a trip to the bathroom or the kitchen, that the newspaper he was reading had been neatly folded and put away. There is such a thing as too much help.

IN SOME WAYS, running a house full of help was like owning a small business, or perhaps being the mayor of a small town. There was always a minor crisis brewing. One involved a night *chowkidar* who had a habit of sleeping on the job. The logical solution was to fire him, but in India that is easier said than done. One of my predecessors in *The Washington Post's* New Delhi bureau had dismissed a *chowkidar* on similar grounds, and the guard had responded with a lawsuit that was still in court a decade later. Gail finally resolved the matter by snapping photographs of the sleeping guard, a blanket tucked comfortably under his chin. When confronted with the evidence the next morning, he left with a fuss but no threats of litigation.

SINCE MOVING BACK to Maryland last year, my wife and I have had to make some adjustments. More than once, I have wished that I were back in New Delhi—usually while circling the hardware-store parking lot on some trivial household errand that previously would have been delegated to Ashok. On the other hand, there's something to be said for self-sufficiency. A couple of months ago, I mowed the lawn for the first time this year. I found I rather enjoyed it. ♦

JOHN LANCASTER

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In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .

“Hybrid” Conservatives Are Learning to Adapt

Candidates who balance tradition and innovation are today's dominant species

Consider Rudy Giuliani—the thrice-married, twice-divorced, pro-choice, civil-union-supporting blue-state former mayor who appears to be the GOP front-runner, pacing even likely Democratic presidential challengers. Is conservatism about to remake itself by reclaiming the center of American politics? Or is it about to collapse from its internal contradictions?

Remember that all the leading conservative candidates are, in a sense, political hybrids, as is President Bush. They inherit Edmund Burke's respect for both liberty and tradition but also his awareness that preserving liberty requires “prudent innovation” amid the turbulence of political life. Modern conservatism embodies this built-in instability. Private versus government aid, the church-state balance, whether to try to spread democracy, how to handle social touchstones like abortion—candidates ponder a wide menu. How they choose will invigorate both American conservatism and the nation as a whole.

—Peter Berkowitz

Hurricane Hugo, a Storm of Disinformation

It was Bush vs. Chávez in the battle for Latin American loyalties. Who won?

What a spectacle it was to see the Venezuelan president chasing the U.S. president up the length of Latin America, from Buenos Aires to Port-au-Prince, shouting challenges and insults at the American leader and “empire.” Gilbert and Sullivan could have turned this indirect combat between the hemisphere's two most self-consciously macho presidents into a smashing comic opera.

But the clash illuminated differences in both style and substance. Chávez and his oil-fueled “twenty-first-century socialism” are just corked wine in a new bottle. The essence of this newfangled old-fashioned caudillo is an aggressive, globalized rehash of the kind of paternalism that caused and sustained the underdevelopment of Latin America—the most unequal region on earth. What Latinos need now is the exact opposite of Chavista authoritarianism: free trade and markets, pluralism, an end to scapegoating. And the United States, if it surmounts its regional mistakes, can help nurture that productive alternative.

—William Ratliff

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